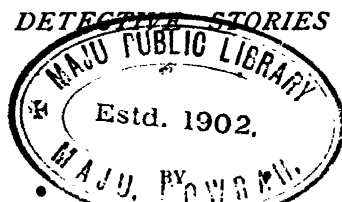
Link by Link

By Dick Donovan



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DETECTIVE STORIES



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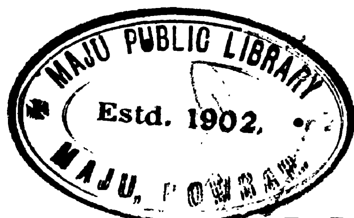
DICK DONOVAN

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN FROM MANCHESTER," "TRACKED TO DOOM," "FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED," ETC.



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1893

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LINK BY LINK.

A DEAD MAN'S DREAM.

THE Napoleonic dictum that nothing happens except the improbable was never more strikingly exemplified than it was in connection with the theft of Lady Monksfield's jewels. The case was an extraordinary one from beginning to end, and the way in which the discovery of the jewels was brought about reads like a transcript from the pages of some wild and fantastic romance. The truth of it, however, admits of no question, as will presently be seen.

The late Lady Monksfield, as every one knows, was renowned for marvellous beauty. It was said, indeed, that she was one of the few perfectly and artistically beautiful women to be found in all the world. She was one of two sisters who were born in humble circumstances. Their father was for many years in the service of the Honourable East India Company; but ill health and a series of misfortunes reduced him and his family to a state bordering on bankruptcy. He died suddenly; and at the time of his death his worldly possessions scarcely afforded him decent burial. His two dutiful daughters—who had been well educated—struggled for some time to support themselves and an

invalid mother by giving lessons in music and foreign languages, but on the death of the mother the young ladies went on to the stage, as they had always evinced a talent that way, but their parents had been strongly opposed to their adopting the profession of the stage as a means of livelihood.

Charlotte—who afterwards became Lady Monksfield—soon took the town by storm, as the saying is. Her appearance at Old Drury in the character of Juliet is still regarded as one of the chief theatrical events of the century. Never before had a Juliet so exquisitely beautiful and graceful been seen. Shakespeare himself must have been enraptured could he have heard his polished language as it was spoken by Charlotte, whose bell-like voice, arch manner, and intelligent rendering of the part perfectly electrified the audience who, packed like sardines in a box, filled the theatre from floor to ceiling. Of course, after the brilliant triumph which the young lady that night achieved, all sorts of good things were predicted for her, but few could have dreamed that she was destined to become one of the wealthiest and most prominent of the aristocratic ladies of the realm.

Amongst those who witnessed her performance on that memorable night was Lord Monksfield, who had not long before succeeded to the title and the enormous estates that went with it. His lordship's fortune was almost fabulous, and the society belles of the realm vied with each other in their endeavours to capture him. But he was known to have declared that he would remain single until he was thirty, and in order to avoid the snares that were laid for him, he made a tour of the world, and had only just returned after four years' absence when he formed one of the units of the vast

audience that crammed Drury Lane on the night when the new Juliet made her *début*. It was noted by those about him that during the whole of the evening he watched the charming actress with a fixed and dreamy stare, as if he had fallen under some strange spell of enchantment. Three months later rumours were spread that the lucky and beautiful actress was engaged to Lord Monksfield, whereat there was much disdainful turning up of aristocratic noses and bitter heart-burning amongst the disappointed ones. His lordship's family did everything they could to prevent what they were pleased to term the *mésalliance*; but he was a young man of determination and inflexibility of purpose, and in due course he led the beautiful Charlotte to the altar. Amongst the many presents he loaded her with was a necklet of diamonds, the stones of which were said to be unique. He had bought them during his wanderings in Persia, and it was whispered that the price he paid was equal to a Jew's ransom. But this necklet was only one of many costly things he presented to her; and, as she was known to have a passion for jewellery, almost every one included jewellery amongst his other gifts.

It has been said that beauty unadorned is adorned the most, and from the strictly artistic point of view that is no doubt true; but Lady Monksfield showed no disposition to give force and point to the canon. She believed that her own superb beauty was heightened by the beauty of gems, and she was in the habit of adorning her person with jewels valued at tens of thousands of pounds. This vanity—and vanity seems inseparable from the feminine nature—caused many hard things to be said against her ladyship, although it would not seem that they had any effect.

Soon after her marriage, a story that was regarded as fantastic at the time, but which I happen to know was mainly true, gained currency, and was to the effect that a band of expert swell mobsmen had vowed to steal the jewels. These rascals—so the rumour ran—had actually formed themselves into a financial syndicate, with a secretary and banking account, in order to provide funds for defraying any necessary expenses that might be incurred in carrying out their nefarious transactions. I was at this time consulted by his lordship, who was anxious to learn how much truth there was in the story that was floating about, and I was enabled to tell him that I had strong reasons for believing that some desperate adventurers did contemplate making an attempt to enrich themselves at his lordship's expense, should an opportunity occur. As it would have been exceedingly difficult to have procured legal evidence against the conspirators, it was not deemed desirable to take any steps in that direction; but I very urgently impressed upon Lord Monksfield the necessity for adopting some plan that would more effectually safeguard his wife's property. He himself, it appears, had a great love for jewels, and liked to see his wife adorned with the barbaric splendour of glittering stones and rich gold. Otherwise it might have been difficult to understand why he should have caused himself anxiety by putting so much wealth in baubles.

Impressed with my suggestion, he lost no time in instructing an eminent firm to build a strong room at his chief seat, Pierrepont Castle, and also at his London House in Park Lane; and, in addition, they were to manufacture a box for the removal of the jewels from place to place. This box he designed him-

self, having some faculty for invention, and it was so ingenious and so strong that it might have defied the most expert cracksman in the world.

At Pierrepont Castle, the room was constructed in the thickness of the castle wall, and near the bed occupied by her ladyship when staying at the castle. The door was particularly ingenious, and calculated to resist every illegal attempt to open it. The lock was a marvel of mechanical science. This lock could only be opened by means of a clock-work arrangement which was set in motion by a key. This key, however, did not work in the ordinary way, and the slightest bungling with it threw the whole mechanism out of gear, and immediately a large bell that hung outside began to clang, and so loud and brazen was its clamour that the deaf might have heard it.

In the face of these unusual precautions, it may be thought that the theft of the jewels was impossible; but we shall see directly that they were actually stolen. It was early in September, and a very beautiful September it was. In fact, that summer had been unusually hot and fine, and September came in glowing and brilliant. Lady Monksfield and her husband had only recently returned from the Continent in order to be present at the marriage of one of his lordship's cousins. On the 5th of September, Lady Monksfield gave a garden party at Pierrepont Castle, at which there was an unusual gathering of notabilities, including His Imperial Highness, Prince Vionville, whose name was on every one's lips owing to his connection with the so-called "Rubenstein scandal," which had been a *bonne bouche* to society during the summer. The Russian Ambassador was also present, as well as two native princes from India, who were making a tour through

Europe in search of knowledge. At this distinguished gathering Lady Monksfield appeared in all the splendour of her very finest jewels. It was said that the diamonds she wore were valued at over a hundred thousand pounds. The company dispersed about six o'clock, and after the fatigues of a very trying day her ladyship retired to her room, previous to dressing for dinner, and she told her maids that she did not want to be disturbed for an hour. Soon after seven, she summoned her attendants and dressed for dinner. Before doing so, however, she wished to put away her jewels in the strong box; but the key could not be found. Her ladyship herself always took charge of the key, but on this particular occasion she had evidently mislaid it in the excitement of adorning herself for the party.

Her husband had a duplicate key, but as he was dressing, and it was close on the dinner hour, her ladyship decided not to disturb him, so she placed her jewels in a cabinet, which in turn was put into a wardrobe, and the wardrobe locked. Towards midnight, when Lady Monksfield was about to retire for the night, she asked her husband for his duplicate key, which he handed to her. It should be mentioned that the lock of the wonderful strong room was so arranged that in the event of a key being lost, the mechanism could in a few moments be so altered that while the duplicate key could be used by any one in the secret, the lost key used in the ordinary way would be of no avail. On reaching her room, Lady Monksfield opened the strong room door with her husband's key; then she readjusted the mechanism, and went to the wardrobe with the intention of procuring the cabinet of jewels, but to her horror she found the cabinet gone. In spite of all the costly

arrangements that had been made to safeguard the valuable property it had disappeared.

Late as the hour was, her ladyship aroused the household, and not only was the castle searched, but the extensive park and grounds as well. The result, however, was disappointment. No sign was discovered that was calculated to explain the mysterious disappearance of her ladyship's jewels. As soon as it was possible to do so, Lord Monksfield telegraphed to me, asking me to go down without an hour's loss of time, and that afternoon I found myself at the castle, and listening to a recital of the loss from her ladyship's own lips.

"Now, Mr. Donovan," exclaimed her ladyship, when she had finished, "what is your opinion, and who do you think is the guilty person?"

"I beg you to excuse me from answering that question at present," I answered, "though I will go so far as to say that there are several persons concerned in this robbery. And one of the thieves at least, if not more, will be found amongst your own servants. Probably amongst your maids."

Her ladyship held her hands in horror as she exclaimed, "Impossible, Mr. Donovan! Why, I would trust each of my three maids with untold gold."

"I am afraid you are too confiding," I ventured to remark. "However, a little later on, perhaps, we shall have some data to go upon. Now I want your ladyship to try and remember where you put the key of the strong room. It is most important that you should do so."

"But I cannot," she cried, with an arch pout of her pretty lips, and a most attractive expression of perplexity on her beautiful face.

I assured her that it was highly probable she could if she could recall some of the incidents that occurred during the morning when she was performing her toilet previous to appearing at the garden-party. She still insisted that it was impossible to do so, and I therefore asked the following questions with a view to helping her:—

"Who took your jewels from the strong room?"

"I did so myself, because my husband has repeatedly requested me never to allow any one else to open the door."

"Who was there at the time?"

"Mary Simpson, who is my hair-dresser and under-maid."

"Any one else besides Simpson?"

"No."

"There is no doubt about that?"

"None whatever."

"Now, will your ladyship please try once more to remember where you placed the key after you had got your jewels?"

She pondered for some little time, and then exclaimed joyfully—

"Why, yes; I do remember now, I left it on the writing-table in my boudoir, together with some trinkets I had been wearing."

"You are enabled to speak with certainty in this matter?"

"I am absolutely certain now."

"Are the trinkets still on the table?"

"I don't know. I will go and see." She left the room, returning very shortly with the trinkets in her hand. She had found them exactly where she had put them, but there was no key there, and at this stage she

was able to recall to her memory the fact that she had actually looked on the table when she missed the key, being led to do so by a shadowy remembrance that she had placed it there. But not finding it, she concluded she must have been mistaken.

In my own mind I was sure she was right. She *had* placed the key on the table, and it had been purposely removed in order that her ladyship should not be able to replace the jewels in the strong room, so that they might thus be purloined. This of course argued an enemy in the camp, and I was prepared to find that enemy in the person of Mary Simpson, the maid, who was present at the time; and if my surmise was correct, she had been instigated by some one who had influence over her. I did not mention my suspicions to Lady Monksfield, but I asked her to allow me to inspect her rooms.

Her bedroom, dressing-room, and boudoir were *en suite*, and if the communicating door between the dressing-room and boudoir was open, any one in the dressing-room could see into the boudoir. Now, supposing that Simpson had seen her mistress lay the key on the writing-table, was it not possible that at the first opportunity the girl removed it? She would not carry it about on her person; I was convinced of that, for the risk would be too great; but she probably placed it in some other part of the room where it was not likely to be easily seen.

Arguing thus with myself, I was induced to make a very rigid search of the room, and I was rewarded by finding the key on the mantelpiece, artfully concealed behind a vase. I say artfully concealed, because I had not a doubt in my mind that it had been purposely hidden there. When I made my discovery known to

Lady Monksfield, I asked her if it was in the least likely that she herself had placed the key behind the vase. She replied in the negative, and on this point she was absolutely positive.

My suspicions against Mary Simpson were now materially strengthened, and I resolved to shadow her very closely. I ascertained that she had been with Lady Monksfield only three months. Previous to that, she had been for two years in the service of Lady Ingleborough. At the town residence of Lady Ingleborough a burglary was committed, and shortly after Simpson left, on the plea that her nerves had been so affected she could not endure to stay in the house.

If I had had any doubt before that Simpson was in a position to give some valuable information about Lady Monksfield's jewels, that doubt was now entirely removed, and my vigilance was increased. She was a young woman, passably good-looking, but with rather a sullen expression of countenance, and an eye that by no means pleased me. There was a look in it that I did not like. Lady Monksfield, however, seemed to have formed quite a liking for the girl. She said she was "delightfully amusing," and "the most perfect hair-dresser" she had ever had. Apparently her ladyship was of opinion that any one who was delightfully amusing and a perfect hair-dresser could do no evil; but there she and I widely differed, and the estimate I formed of Mary Simpson was very far from being in the young lady's favour.

About a week after the robbery of the jewels a report appeared in the newspapers that a man named Wilfred Hardcastle, who kept a small jeweller's shop in Deansgate, Manchester, had quarrelled with his brother, who thereupon drew a revolver, and, firing, mortally

wounded him. The assassin then disappeared, and had not been captured. The wounded man remained in a state of unconsciousness, and no hope was entertained of his recovery. I had previously learnt by observation that Mary Simpson read the newspapers with an avidity that was somewhat remarkable; and the morning after the report of this affair in Manchester was published, she went to her mistress in great distress, and said she had that morning got a letter informing her that a dear relative had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and she begged to be allowed to go up to town at once. Of course, permission to do this was readily given, and Lady Monksfield expressed great sympathy with the girl, who soon after took her departure, being driven to the station in the dog-cart. All unknown to her or her mistress I was on her track, and I ascertained that, instead of taking a ticket for London, she booked to an important junction about twenty miles off. At this junction she procured a fresh ticket, her destination being Manchester. Arrived in Cottonopolis, she drove in a cab to Hardcastle's house in Deansgate.

This important and ancient thoroughfare has undergone many changes since then. It has been widened, and some fine premises erected; but at the time with which I am dealing it was a villainous region, the very atmosphere of which seemed saturated with human wickedness. Hardcastle's house was one of the old, ramshackle, ill-smelling buildings which formerly stood on the right-hand side between lower Peter Street and St. Ann's Street. The tragedy had caused a great sensation—as it was bound to do amongst such a community—and Hardcastle's name was on every one's lips. I gathered that he was a

young man, who ostensibly kept a jeweller's shop, but his stock was so small, and he did such a poor business, that his neighbours often expressed surprise how he managed to exist. His brother, George Hardcastle, lived with him. George was a sailor, but had not been to sea for two years, and bore the reputation of being somewhat disreputable. When Mary Simpson arrived, Wilfred was still living, but had not recovered consciousness. He was being medically attended by Doctor John Howlett, a local surgeon of considerable reputation, and in an interview I had with him he informed me that he considered "the case an exceedingly interesting one." Two shots had been fired. One had taken effect in the neck, and had come within a hair's breadth of severing the carotid artery. This bullet the doctor had succeeded in extracting. The second, however, was embedded in the brain, and it was impossible to get at it.

"Do you think he will live?" I inquired of the doctor.

"It is absolutely impossible he can last beyond a few hours, or at the most a few days," was the answer.

I now took Doctor Howlett fully into my confidence, and I asked him to allow me to accompany him to the patient's beside, in the character of a fellow-practitioner. This, of course, he consented to, and I was careful to so disguise myself that I had no fear Mary Simpson would discover my identity. The reason of her being there was soon made manifest. Hardcastle was her sweetheart, and they were to have been married in the course of that year. She was in terrible distress, and on our arrival she appealed piteously to us to save her lover. It was too evident, however, that the man was doomed. Some slight medical knowledge I possessed

enabled me to determine that, apart from Doctor Howlett's assurance, nothing on earth could snatch him from the jaws of death. The dying man lay on a narrow bed in a squalid room, which must have been a very striking contrast to Mary Simpson, after the magnificence of Pierrepont Castle. He looked peculiarly ghastly. His face was like marble, and the medical bandages about his neck and head were particularly suggestive of grave cerements. There was a blank expression in his eyes, which were fixed on the ceiling; and occasionally he muttered something, but it was absolutely unintelligible. After the doctor had made a very critical examination of his patient, he informed me that the unfortunate fellow was very near his end, and that nothing more could possibly be done for him. Skill and science were alike unavailing. The doctor was obliged to go away, but I said that I would remain, as I wished to watch Simpson, in order, if possible, to get some direct evidence against her that she had been a party to the robbery. And I was, of course, particularly anxious to try and find out what had become of the jewels.

Believing me to be a medical man, she expressed great satisfaction at my resolve to stay; for she was evidently buoyed up with the belief that while there was life there was hope, and she still thought her lover would recover. Her devotion raised her considerably in my estimation, and I could not restrain a feeling of sympathy for her in her great distress. The theory, however, that I worked out was this. At the instigation of the Hardcastles, or probably of her lover only, Mary had purloined the jewels, and handed them to Wilfred, who, I was quite prepared to learn, had been present during the garden party at Pierrepont Castle,

for at such a place on such an occasion there would not be much difficulty in the way of a servant entertaining a stranger. The robbery might or might not have been premeditated. Perhaps it was due to a sudden impulse on the part of the girl on seeing temptation in her way. Be that as it may, I had no doubt she had taken the jewels and handed them to Hardcastle, who at once conveyed them to Manchester, where he may have taken his brother into the secret, or the brother might even have been present too at the castle on the day of the robbery. Anyway, the brothers had subsequently quarrelled about the division of the spoil, and that had led to the tragedy.

On the assumption that this theory was more or less correct, I felt perfectly justified in remaining there, even in the solemn presence of death, and endeavouring in the cause of justice to bring the guilt home to the right person, and recover the stolen property, if that were possible. But in taking the step I did, I had no foreshadowing of the extraordinary revelation that was to be made to me. Although, humanly speaking, I could not withhold a certain amount of sympathy from the wretched fellow who was drifting out to the great ocean of eternity, my interest was concentrated on Mary Simpson, who seemed disinclined to leave the bedside of the dying man. The domestic arrangements of the house were under the care of a servant, an elderly woman, who, however, did not trouble us. She was deaf and somewhat stupid, and seemed to be stolidly indifferent to all that was passing around her.

About three hours after Doctor Howlett's departure the anticipated end seemed to come. The wounded man's countenance changed. The hue of death came

into it. A glaze spread over his eyes, he breathed stertorously a few times, then there was a great upheaval of the chest, a falling again, a solemn silence, and all was over. A guilty soul had passed, and in his case man's laws could avail nothing. In the presence of the Great Judge of all he would have to account for his deeds. With a pitiable cry of despair Mary Simpson exclaimed—

"Oh, my God! he is dead! he is dead!" then she threw herself across the body, and moaned with the agony of her mental distress. With some difficulty I raised her and led her from the room. She seemed very reluctant to go, and wept bitterly. But I persuaded her, now that all was over, to retire and endeavour to compose herself, as well as take some rest. This done, I was about to summon the old servant and instruct her to compose the dead limbs, when it suddenly occurred to me to return to the room and subject it to a thorough search, in the hope that I might find some tangible evidence that my suspicions were well founded. With this intention I quietly and reverently entered the presence of the dead.

It had been a bright day, but now the afternoon sun was waning, and its light streamed through the window, at which the blind had not yet been drawn, and illumined the face of the dead man, until, in its marble pallor, it looked like the face of a carved effigy on a monument. As I turned and gazed at it, being struck by the effect the light produced, I fancied I saw a quivering of the lower lip, and going to the side of the bed, I placed my fingers on the man's left wrist to try and detect if there was any pulsation, but the pulse was absolutely imperceptible. A small handglass was on the dressing-table. I caught it up, and held it close to the dead

man's mouth, but there wasn't even the suspicion of a film. Being satisfied that he was dead, I was returning to the table to put down the glass, when I was startled by what seemed to be a sigh. I spun round on my heel quickly, but there was no sign of life in that rigid face.

I began to think I was actually getting nervous and was filled with fancies; and, restoring the mirror to the table, I was moving towards a cupboard, which I was going to examine, when I heard these words—

"Ah! how beautiful."

There was something positively weird and uncanny in this, for the tone of the voice was hollow, and seemed to come from afar off. I glanced quickly at the bed, but there was no motion in the still figure: the deathly pallor of the face was as marked as ever. "Surely," I thought to myself, "this is a fantastic trick of my own imagination." I stood almost as if a spell had fallen upon me, wondering whether I had absolutely heard the words or not, when again they were repeated, and I saw a motion of the supposed dead man's lips. I strode hurriedly to the bedside once more and felt his wrist, but the pulse was imperceptible, and the body was cold. Apparently it was a corpse: there was not the faintest sign of life that I could discover, and yet that dead man spoke again. Very slowly, very low came the words, and somehow they hardly seemed to issue from the man's mouth. The effect was similar to that produced by a ventriloquist when he throws his voice to a distance.

"How they shine," said the dead man . . . . "Mary . . . . we shall be rich. . . . . There never were diamonds like these before. . . . . See, I have bought this house for you. . . . . You like the sea. . . . .

Hearken—do you hear it?—at the bottom of the garden are the cliffs . . . . and the sea beats there for ever and ever. . . . . We must be cautious. . . . . There is danger. . . . . If they should discover us. . . . . Beautiful . . . . thousands and thousands—up . . . . Hark! . . . . Where are you? . . . . The light's gone out."

A long-drawn sigh followed the last words, then there was silence again. The eyes had never moved; the rigidity of the face had never relaxed, no warm hue came into the marble-like skin. I could scarcely realize that I had heard the words I have recorded. I felt as if I had been dreaming myself. If the disjointed sentences that had issued from the mouth of the dead man meant anything, they meant that he was, as I had suspected, a party to the robbery, and Mary Simpson, his sweetheart, had aided him. It was very startling, very strange, and unnatural. When I had recovered from my surprise, I again tried to detect signs of life in Wilfred Hardcastle. But there were none. His eyelids were cold and like putty. I pressed them down. They remained down. I partly raised his hand and arm, and let it go. It fell with a dull thud. Could there be any reasonable doubt that the man was stone dead? At any rate, I had none. But somehow I felt that I could not prosecute my search then; so I summoned the old servant, and told her that her master had gone, and I left her alone in the room with the corpse. I came back in about half an hour. She had laid him out and covered him with a sheet. I turned the sheet down and looked once more on the face. There was no change. It was the face of pale death.

Doctor Howlett had promised to look in as he passed about six o'clock. He fulfilled his promise, though it

was nearly seven when he came. I asked him to go up and look at Hardcastle and satisfy himself that he was really dead. When he came down again he exclaimed—

"Dead!—why, yes, he's as dead as a door nail, and must have been dead for at least four hours."

I did not tell the doctor of my startling experience; I was afraid he might think I had taken leave of my senses; but if ever dead men dream, Wilfred Hardcastle dreamed, and, moreover, he talked in his dream. It so affected me that I resolved not to take any steps until after the funeral. Five days later he was consigned to the grave. He was buried at Eccles Cemetery. An immense crowd, attracted by morbid curiosity, on account of the tragedy, followed the hearse, but there was only one mourner there. That mourner was Mary Simpson. During her absence I searched the house thoroughly, and in the cellar under a heap of rubbish I found a common wooden box that had a cornflour label on it: but in that box were thousands of pounds' worth of diamonds and other jewels. They represented the greater portion of those stolen from Pierrepont Castle. So far, then, my theory proved to be correct. That evening it was my painful duty to arrest Mary Simpson. She seemed to become paralyzed with terror, and when the first shock had passed, she flung herself at my feet and implored for mercy. She said that her lover, who was needy and unfortunate, had tempted her, and she yielded to his entreaties to steal the diamonds. She had resolved to make the attempt on the day of the garden party, and chance favoured her. Wilfred Hardcastle and his brother both came to Pierrepont. They hung about all day, and after dark Wilfred went to a part of the garden where she had arranged to meet him, and she handed him the jewel-case.

However much I might have pitied the foolish woman in my heart, I had no power to release her from the penalty of her wrong-doing, and I delivered her to the law. But when in due course she was put upon her trial, she was dealt leniently with, and got off with a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment; notwithstanding a suspicion that she could, if she had liked, have thrown some light on the burglary business at her former mistress's, Lady Ingleborough's, residence.

The assassin of Wilfred Hardcastle was never arrested. He eluded justice, and what became of him the world will never know, and why he killed his brother must also to a large extent remain a mystery. My success in recovering Lady Monksfield's jewels gave her ladyship great pleasure, and as a special mark of her appreciation she presented me with a small medallion portrait of herself, set round with diamonds, which I still possess amongst my many treasures.

THE ROMANCE OF THE "NEVER-FAIL-'EM MINES."

The "Never-Fail-'Em Silver and Lead Mines" were situated in Mexico, and of incalculable richness, at least so the glowing accounts that were put forth to attract the public said. So rich were they, and contained lodes of such prodigious thickness, that they well merited the name of the "Never-Fail-'Em." Specimens of silver ore, said to have been taken from the mines, were exhibited in London, and attracted universal attention, for these specimens, it was affirmed, contained sixty per cent. of pure silver. The exact locality of the mines was indicated as being in the little known range of the Sierra de Alabastro, in the south-eastern portion of the province of Yucatan, which, as every one probably knows, is the very wildest part of Mexico. Where it is not desert, jungles, almost absolutely impenetrable, in which death in many shapes and forms lurks, are one of the prevailing characteristics of this strange country. Should any hardy adventurer attempt to explore these fastnesses, he would have to run the risks of all kinds of fierce and savage animals, noxious insects, the most venomous serpents, and fever germs bred in the pestilential swamps. Then there are unfordable rivers, the haunts of alligators, crocodiles, and a fierce, ravenous leech, which if it once gets on a human being, buries itself in his flesh and gorges on his blood to such an extent, that unless it is at once cut out the victim speedily succumbs. Then there are arid wastes and vast tracts

of sandy plains, where the rays of the blistering sun are never tempered by a single cloud, and the heat, night and day, is so intense that nothing human can live and flourish even if water could be procured; but water there is absolutely unknown. Yet in this forbidding country, in the range of the wild, weird Alabastro Mountains, nature had deposited lodes of silver so thick and vast that they were practically inexhaustible. All this, and more, was set forth in the glowing report, and the public were invited to subscribe the trifle of a quarter million of money to work and develop the mines, while the prospects of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice were more than hinted at. But perhaps it is almost needless for me to say that the little drawbacks I have enumerated, in the shape of the fauna, the climate, and the jungles, were not touched upon in the prospectus.

According to the same report, the way in which the mines were discovered was no less remarkable than the mines themselves. It appeared that a certain Captain Hulcup, a native of Bristol, sailed from his native town in a brig called the *Crimson Cloud* of which he was the owner, bound for that part of Mexico known as the Frontera de Tabasco. He had provided himself with two specially built boats—very strong, of very light draught, and capable of carrying a large quantity of provisions. With these boats he intended to proceed up the great river called Usumasinta, in the hope of being able to penetrate to Peten, which is practically in the very heart of Mexico. It is entirely surrounded and shut in by vast ranges of mountains. To the west is the range of the Sierra de Alabastro, which trending to the north-east from the apex of a triangle, as it were, joins with the Sierra de Tipu, the boundary

line of British Honduras. This range comes south until it merges into the Sierra Pedernales, which in turn trends south and west, and effects a junction with the great range known as the Sierra Madre, or the Mother Mountains. This last range forms a great loop, and zig-zags about to the west until it joins on to the Alabastro. It will thus be seen that Peten is absolutely shut in by the mountain barriers, and such travellers as have had the hardihood to attempt exploration in this region, and have lived to come back, have told wild and thrilling stories, not only of the wonderful strip of mountain-enclosed country, but of the vast wealth lying in the mountain gorges.

The river Usumasinta rises somewhere on the eastern slopes of the Alabastros, that is to say, in the Province of Peten itself. Forcing its way through the mountain chain, it drops down by a series of magnificent cataracts, and being joined by many tributary streams, swells into a vast volume of water, flows for many hundreds of miles through dark and dense jungle, past many towns and villages, and finally empties itself by way of the Frontier of Tabasco into the Gulf of Mexico.

These geographical particulars are necessary to the interest of this story. Captain Daniel Hulcup—so it was averred—was a man of an exceedingly adventurous spirit, and had sailed the world over. Bristol is famed for having produced many hardy and daring navigators, who have by their explorations and discoveries filled up many of the blank spaces on the maps of the world. Captain Hulcup had for several years traded to Mexico, and had long been fired with the very laudable ambition to penetrate into that mysterious mountain-engirdled belt of country called Peten; and he conceived the idea of finding a water-way to it by means of the Usumasinta. He was,

of course, aware that the river was only navigable in parts, but his special boats had been so constructed that they could be easily taken to pieces and carried past the cataracts. Having completed his arrangements, he set forth on his adventure with a picked crew, his own nephew being chief mate. Arrived at the mouth of the river, the brig was partly dismantled and laid up in charge of the mate and four or five hands, and then Captain Hulcup and nine men set off for the interior, instructions having been given to the mate that if the exploring party did not return to the coast in the course of nine months—which was considered ample time, barring accidents, for the accomplishment of the object aimed at—he was to sail for home again.

The nine months slipped away, and no tale nor tidings came to hand of the exploring party, so that in accordance with his orders the mate fitted the ship for sea, and set sail for Bristol. As there was an absence of positive proof of Captain Hulcup's death, no steps could be taken with regard to his property, and for two years his wife and relatives remained in a state of uncertainty and suspense, when, to the surprise of every one and the joy of his wife, the Captain returned. He was the sole survivor of the party, who had perished one by one through hardships, fevers, and fights with the Indians. Captain Hulcup, when he set out on his journey was a hale, hearty, robust man in his fiftieth year. He had not a wrinkle in his face, nor a grey hair in his head, but when he came back he was wizened and white like an old, old man. For a long time he was very reticent about his adventures. He seemed averse to talking about them, but it began to be whispered that he had brought back wealth with him, though no information was forthcoming as to how he had derived

his wealth. Twelve months later he announced his intention of sailing again for Mexico, and he had his brig thoroughly overhauled and repaired. He began, too, to lay in a large stock of mining appliances.

His nephew, Philip Marland, was again to go with him as his chief mate. This caused some surprise, as it had become known that there had been frequent quarrels between the uncle and nephew, owing, as it was understood, to differences about money matters. On one occasion Captain Hulcup had been enjoying himself in a favourite hostel of his, situated in the nautical part of Bristol town, and having imbibed somewhat rashly and freely of mine host's strong rum, he fell to quarreling with his nephew, who was with him, and he accused Philip of being a traitor, a thief, a vagabond, and almost everything else that was bad; and there and then he vowed that the nephew should not sail again in the *Crimson Cloud*.

The violence of the old man's language on this occasion, coupled with many things that he had said, left no doubt on the minds of the listeners that he entertained an intensely bitter feeling against his once favourite nephew. The surprise, therefore, was very great when a few weeks later it became known that after all Philip was to sail in the brig, and it was of course assumed that the skipper had forgiven the young man, and their differences had been settled.

The *Crimson Cloud* set sail on a November afternoon. The weather had been very wild, and was still stormy. The vessel was towed down the channel as far as Lundy Island, where the tug left her, and the *Crimson Cloud* went on her way to the Atlantic. That very night, however, Captain Hulcup mysteriously disappeared, and was supposed to have either jumped overboard or to

have fallen over in the darkness. Two days later, strangely enough, the *Crimson Cloud* came to grief. She was driven ashore in St. Ives' Bay, off the coast of Cornwall, during a terrific gale of wind, and was totally wrecked, all hands being lost except the mate, the boatswain, and one of the sailors.

Such was the story in the main that was allowed to become public property, and so far the matter seemed to end.

A couple of years served to render all the incidents and events connected with Captain Hulcup indistinct in the public mind, when there appeared in the leading London and provincial papers a flaming prospectus of the "Never-Fail-'Em Mines," and subscriptions were invited to enable the promoters of the Company to develop the "magnificent property." It was set forth that "the late Captain Hulcup, of Bristol, discovered the mines, and brought home with him masses of pure silver, the like of which had never before been seen." He kept the secret of the mine to himself, but some time after his death his widow had discovered a written record of his adventures in Mexico and the discovery of the mines, together with specimens of the ore, in an old chest, which had been stored in a lumber room. By the advice of some of her relatives she communicated with "a well-known Company promoter," who sent two gentlemen of great experience in mining matters out to Mexico, with instructions to penetrate to Peten at all cost, and survey and report on the mines which Captain Hulcup claimed to have discovered. These gentlemen had recently returned, having faithfully and fully carried out their mission. Not only did they bring back samples of magnificently rich ore, but they reported that the lodes were apparently so thick as to be practically

inexhaustible. On the strength of this report two or three wealthy men, including a "Captain Edward St. John," had entered into a contract with the Mexican Government, and had got a concession of the mines for fifty years, during which it was calculated that silver enough could be extracted to supply the world, and those who were fortunate to secure shares could hardly fail to grow wealthy.

Such were the accounts that were given, and such the glowing prospects that were held out to induce people to find the necessary capital to work these wonderful lodes of almost pure silver.

The scheme took such a firm hold of the public imagination that the capital was over subscribed, notwithstanding that certain of the financial papers pretty plainly hinted that it might be well to inquire further into the matter, and obtain a perfectly independent report. People, however, were not to be deterred, and they planked their money freely. A few days after the closing of the lists the one pound shares were quoted at a premium of four pounds, and many actually changed hands at that price. Like all dreams of fabled El Dorado, these were to prove delusive and heart-breaking. For five long years the people who had invested their money waited with the sickening sense of hope deferred for the promised enormous dividends, but they were never forthcoming. Not one single penny piece was ever paid as a dividend, and the directors either would not or could not give any information as to what was being done. The whole business was obscured in such an atmosphere of mystery that nobody could tell whether the mines were being worked or not. Many of the people who had taken shares had died broken-hearted and ruined; and those who then held shares would gladly have

accepted as many shillings as they had paid pounds if any one could have been found foolish enough to take the shares off their hands. But, as a matter of fact, they were absolutely unsaleable, even at a few pence.

Two years after the formation of the Company, "Captain Edward St. John," who had been managing director and one of the vendors of the mine, retired, owing, as it was asserted, to ill-health, and it was subsequently reported that he had died. His place was taken by a Mr. John Martin Fairfax. But this gentleman's accession to office did not improve matters, he seemed to know as little as, and was if possible less communicative than, his colleagues. It was at this juncture of affairs that Lady Violet Belstane, widow of Sir John Rose Belstane, who was for some time Governor of the Mauritius, consulted her lawyer on the matter. Influenced by the specious statements of the promoters of the Company, she had invested no less a sum than ten thousand pounds, and, having waited in vain for years for some return, or some definite particulars of what was being done, she decided at last to take legal advice, as she began to fear that the whole business was a swindle. Her lawyer was a Mr. Thomas Gregson, of King's Bench Walk, Temple, and this gentleman requested me to call upon him. During the interview he gave me all the particulars, so far as he knew them, with reference to the Company, and he instructed me to look into the matter and learn as much as I possibly could.

"My own opinion is," he said, "that my unfortunate client, Lady Belstane, will never see a penny piece of her money again, for, unless I am very much mistaken, the Company is a gigantic swindle, and if we can only get proof that such is the case steps must be taken to

bring the rascals to justice, so that they may be punished for their evil-doing."

He was anxious to know what my views and opinions were, but I told him that until I had made some inquiries about the Company I could say nothing one way or the other. Promising to return in a week and report, I took my leave, and commenced at once to prosecute my researches into the history of this marvellous association. During the week I learned sufficient to convince me that there was something decidedly fishy about the whole concern, and that in the interests of justice and order farther investigations were desirable.

When I had laid the result of my week's labours before Mr. Gregson, he asked me what steps I thought it best to take to get proof of what was, at this stage, little more than suspicion. At any rate, in the absence of anything like direct and acceptable evidence, nothing could be done.

"The proper step," I replied, "is for me or some one else to proceed secretly to the mines, and thus find out whether they are being worked or not."

"Yes, no doubt that is the right thing," answered Mr. Gregson, scratching his head in a puzzled way, "but where the deuce are the funds to come from?"

I acknowledged that that was a huge difficulty, but it was not a problem I could be called upon to solve. Certainly I had no intention of finding the necessary expenses myself.

"Of course not," he said, "but the matter had better remain in abeyance until I have had an opportunity of again consulting with Lady Belstane."

I left on this understanding, and three or four days later I received a note from him asking me to call at once.

"My client, Lady Belstane," he began, "has had a conference with other two or three of the largest share-

holders in the Never-Fail-'Em Mines, and they have decided amongst them to find the means necessary to defray your expenses out to Mexico, in order that you may ascertain the truth about the mines. I need scarcely say, perhaps, it is important your journey should be kept secret, and I leave it to you to determine the best means to adopt to that end."

I assured Mr. Gregson that, as far as I was concerned, the whole affair would be an inviolable secret until such time as I was in possession of irrefragable evidence that the promoters and directors had been guilty of turpitude.

Having received my commission, I commenced to make my preparations with somewhat mixed feelings. It had been my lot to face dangers in many shapes and forms, and to travel all over the world; but the journey that now lay before me was one that could not be regarded altogether without some misgivings as to the ultimate results. But though I fully realized that many difficulties awaited me, I had no idea of the arduous and perilous nature of the undertaking. I had been in Mexico on a previous occasion when I was in pursuit of a law-breaker, but my duties were confined then to the chief towns and pleasantest parts of the country; but now I had to make my way by untrodden paths and unbeaten tracks into a region about which no information was forthcoming.

I found that it was not an easy matter to reach Yucatan at all—that is, there was no direct communication—so I decided to go out to Cuba, which is separated from North-East Yucatan by a channel or strait, known as the Channel of Yucatan. I was not clear at all how I should proceed from Cuba, but I had little doubt that if I got so far, I should be able to find some means of gaining my objective point. Arrived at Cuba, I learnt,

after much inquiry, that if I managed to reach a spot on the east coast, known as Yuan Cliff, I might, by travelling across a desert, succeed in reaching Peten. After carefully studying the maps, I came to the conclusion that this was an exceedingly dangerous and difficult route, but possibly not more difficult than if I started from some place on the west coast. I therefore closed a bargain with the owner of a small coasting vessel of about ten tons, and we set sail for Yuan Cliff. Arrived there, I found nothing but desolation. The whole of that part of the coast was uninhabited, and at Yuan are the ruins of one of the mysterious and ancient cities, reared by a people who have long since passed into the dust, leaving no trace of their history behind. To reach the mountain barrier of the Sierra Tipu, behind which lies Peten, it was necessary to cross an awful region of marshes that was absolutely impracticable. No man plunging into those miasmatic swamp regions could ever hope to come out alive, so I decided to proceed south to Belize in British Honduras. This I did, and on arriving at the place, I could gain very little information about the part of the country I wished to visit; and people looked upon me as a crank for contemplating a journey to such an out-of-the-way region. I succeeded at last, however, in coming across a native hunter, who had been as far as Peten, and was not indisposed to accompany me there for a handsome consideration. But his description of the risks to be run and the country we should have to pass through was quite calculated to dishearten one, though I was not deterred; and closing a contract with him, and engaging the services of four mahogany-timber trimmers, as they are called, who were to act as porters, we set out on our journey. My porters were men who had been born and

bred in the great forests which are famed for their gigantic mahogany trees; therefore they were thorough craftsmen, and, as I subsequently proved, trustworthy and reliable.

To dwell upon the incidents of that strange and perilous journey would occupy far more space than I have at my disposal. I use the word "perilous" advisedly, for truly perils beset us at every step. There was the peril of the swamps, of the bewildering maze of the rivers and streams, of the deadly miasma, venomous snakes, wild beasts, and poisonous insects of all kinds. The semi-gloom of the vast jungles was depressing, and the hot, moist-steaming atmosphere was painfully enervating. We had to cross two ranges of desolate, barren mountains, and, after a long, weary, and trying journey, we descended at last into the Peten country. Here again we had to traverse vast tracts of forests which swarmed with animal life of all kinds, and though we made frequent inquiries of the natives, we could hear nothing of any silver mines. But at last I met an old man who stated that he had heard it as a tradition, that some years ago a number of white men came from the west coast and prospected a portion of the Alabastro Mountain Range. The tradition ran that they found deposits of silver, but quarrelled and fought amongst themselves, or with the Indians, and, what with their quarrels, disease, and the natural dangers that surrounded them, only two or three succeeded in returning to the coast. It was generally supposed that the silver had been found near the large body of water known as Lake Peten, which is in the northern part of Yucatan.

Although it was now evident that the "Never-Fail-'Em Mines" were as mythical as the fabled gardens of the

Hesperides—for if an English company had been working mines in the country the natives would have known something about it—I resolved to push on to Lake Peten, although my men were somewhat reluctant to proceed farther. But I overcame their scruples and reluctance, and we continued the journey. Progress was necessarily slow, and we suffered much from alternate heat and cold. In the jungles the heat was overpowering, but on the mountain tablelands we were often almost frozen to death. At last we reached Lake Peten, as wild, dreary, and desolate a region as human imagination could picture. The lake is situated amongst the foot-hills of the great range of the Sierra Alabastro. A few natives are scattered about the shores of the lake—which is a most extensive body of water—and live by fishing. They had heard that some white men had come from the coast to the mountains years ago, and had found silver, but they were quite sure that no white men were then mining in the country, and that no systematic attempt at mining had ever been made there. In fact, mining they said was practically impossible there, owing to the physical difficulties of the country, and the want of roads to the coast. After the most exhaustive inquiries on the spot, and having travelled nearly two hundred miles along the range, I had no hesitation in declaring that the "Never-Fail-'Em Mines" were non-existent, and I returned as quickly as possible to Belize, thence back to Cuba, and so on to England.

I have touched but lightly on the difficulties and dangers of the journey I had undertaken; but perhaps I can best sum them all up by saying that many thousands of pounds would hardly have tempted me to have undertaken it again. My health had suffered considerably, and I returned almost completely broken

down, for the climate had made ravages on my constitution. A few weeks rest, however, by the sea-side partially restored me. The report I was enabled to lay before Mr. Gregson and Lady Belstane decided them on the course to pursue, which was to try and bring the offenders to justice, for there could no longer be a doubt that the Company was a gigantic swindle. During my absence application had been made to the Court for permission to voluntarily wind the Company up; but Lady Belstane, with a powerful following of shareholders, effectually opposed this, and the application was refused. Thereupon one or two of the directors resigned, and there had been quite a difficulty in getting a Board.

In continuing my investigations I deemed it of the highest importance that I should make the acquaintance of two persons who obviously were in a position to throw much light on the formation of the Company. These two persons were the widow of the late Captain Hulcup and Captain Edward St. John, the former chairman of the board of directors. In the first place, the information about her husband's discoveries must have come from Mrs. Hulcup; and in the second place, Captain Edward St. John—whoever that mysterious personage might be—could not possibly have been ignorant of the fact that there were no mines, and that the quarter of a million of money obtained from the public had been procured by false pretences and fraudulent misrepresentations. I found that Mrs. Hulcup, after living for many years at Clifton, near Bristol, had suddenly disappeared, and nobody knew where she was then living. But there was a vague idea amongst her former neighbours and acquaintances that she had gone off and got married again. It was remembered that sometimes she talked

about her husband's discoveries in Yucatan, and, on one occasion at least, she had, while in a confidential mood, shown some friends samples of magnificent silver ore which appeared to be excessively rich in the precious metal. This was the extent of the information I was enabled at that period to glean about Widow Hulcup, who apparently was not a communicative woman; and while she had displayed to the admiring gaze of a few friends specimens of unusually rich ore, she had never gone into details, and as little was known therefore, more had to be guessed at.

I now turned my attention to Captain Edward St. John, but here I was confronted with mystery at the very outset. It was reported that he was dead, but nobody knew where he died, when he had died, or why he had died. At any rate, nobody would tell if they did know, and his identity really seemed to be surrounded with as much mystery as the existence of the Mahatmas in the Gobi desert. Whether Captain Edward St. John was a military captain, a naval captain, or a captain of a militia or volunteer regiment, or a coal barge, was as difficult to ascertain as what becomes of all the pins in the world after they have been used. During the time that he held the position of chairman of the board of directors, his address was Prince's Gate, Hyde Park. This was a "swell" address, for there was no house at Prince's Gate of a less rental value than three hundred a year. The one he occupied was rented at four hundred and twenty. He had taken it on an agreement for three years, and had hired the furniture for it from a well-known West-end firm. He occupied the house only twelve months, and the landlord made him an allowance for the remainder of his agreement. He left—according to his own statement—because he was in very bad health,

and he went abroad. Subsequently the landlord heard that the Captain had died at Aix-les-Bains in France. I further ascertained that the gallant Captain had had his mother living with him, but they did not seem to agree very well. The Captain was described as a rather good-looking man, somewhat nautical in his appearance, and about thirty-five years of age; while his mother was turned sixty. Where this interesting gentleman and his mother came from was an unsolved problem, no less than where they had gone to. But as my investigation so far had made it more and more clear to me that Captain Edward St. John had reaped a golden harvest out of the "Never-Fail-'Em Mines," and must presumably have known all about the swindle, inasmuch as he was described as one of the vendors, I pledged myself to solve both problems—that is, where he came from and where he had gone to. Of course, if he was dead, my knowledge of his whereabouts would stop short at the grave. But the fact is, from two or three little things that were told me incidentally, I had my doubts about the Captain's death. At all events, so much mystery surrounded him, that it would be a genial task to me to try and unravel it all, and I set to work accordingly, with an instinctive feeling that if I succeeded I should be able to bring to light a good many particulars about the "Never-Fail-'Em Mines" that could hardly fail to be interesting to the public generally and to the shareholders in particular. Lady Belstane and those who were acting with her were so bent upon sifting matters until the truth was revealed that they gave me practically *carte blanche* to do what I deemed desirable in the interests of all concerned. So off I started for Aix-les-Bains, the fashionable French watering-place in the Haute Savoie.

It was soon made manifest to me that Captain Edward St. John had not departed this life in Aix-les-Bains. He certainly had sojourned there with his dear old mother, for whom, according to all accounts, he had a strong antipathy, and after a time he departed—not for a better world, but, as it was believed, for Paris. To Paris I also wended my way, and had no great difficulty in finding out that Captain St. John and his mother stayed for a brief time at the Hôtel Continental, Rue Rivoli. It is an easy matter to trace a foreigner in Paris, because every hotel proprietor and lodging-house-keeper is bound to make a return to the police of all his guests. Now, if the Captain was anxious to destroy his tracks, he was guilty of the fatuity of retaining a very conspicuous name. Perhaps he was so enamoured of Edward St. John—which had an aristocratic ring in it—that he could not bear to take any other; and then the title "Captain" was no less fascinating. Our Continental neighbours, like the grand American Republic, *do* love a title; it begets homage and deference. This fact, no doubt, weighed with the gentleman I was so anxious to meet when he decided to retain it. I saw reason to feel gratified with this decision, since it was the means of enabling me to trace him to Boulogne, where he had taken a house on a lease; but he was no longer Captain Edward St. John. He had now, owing probably to his proximity to England, deemed to advisable to become plain Mr. Benjamin Smith. Several letters, however, which had been addressed to his hotel in Paris were forwarded on in the name of St. John to Boulogne, and this little incautiousness on his part betrayed his whereabouts to me.

Now I necessarily asked myself an important question: Why had Captain St. John—assuming that to be his

real name—thought proper to change it for a very commonplace one as soon as he settled in Boulogne? The answer suggested itself. He had a very potent reason in the shape of a desire to remain undiscovered by English acquaintances. But I had tracked him down, and proved beyond all cavil that he was not only in the land of the living, but in robust health, and, apparently, flourishing in a financial sense.

I learnt that the people in the neighbourhood regarded him with a certain languid curiosity. I say "languid curiosity," because Boulogne is so essentially the home of foreign adventurers and broken-down swells, who hate to be annoyed by the importunities of anxious creditors, that the natives do not concern themselves very much about the strangers within their gates, so long as the said strangers pay their way there. This "Monsieur" Benjamin Smith did pay, and something more, for he was accounted liberal, but the doings of his domestic circle were a locked secret. No stranger ever entered his house, and no information as to what took place inside ever came to the ears of the neighbours. There was a tradition, however, that an old woman had gone to the house with him when he took possession, but no one had ever seen her since. Living with Monsieur Benjamin Smith, however, was a man known as Jacques Favre, a Frenchman, but he was an absolutely unreadable riddle. He was known as the "silent one," and spent most of his time in the neighbouring *cafés*; drank quantities of absinthe, smoked incessantly, and was as silent as a statue. He associated with no one, spoke to no one, and resented with growls and fierce looks any attempt that was made to speak to him. Both in Aix-les-Bains and Paris I had heard vague rumours of Captain Edward St. John being in companionship with

a sort of shadow, who followed him in silence. Now that was confirmed, and this shadow turned out to be Jacques Favre. The problem was certainly becoming intensely interesting to me, and in proportion to its apparent inscrutability my determination to solve it was strengthened. Here were all the elements of a strong dramatic romance, and I was deeply interested. The *dramatis personæ* were a rich adventurer, who deemed it prudent to live under a false name; an old woman, who for the time had mysteriously disappeared; and a silent Frenchman, who spoke to no one, drank absinthe, and smoked from morn to night.

To have been precipitate or incautious in any way would probably have frustrated my object, so I watchfully waited to learn more, and for the opportunity that I was sure sooner or later would come. It came somewhat sooner than I anticipated. I ascertained that Mr. Benjamin Smith had considerably changed his personal appearance since he first entered on the Boulogne scene. He was a dark-complexioned man with small, black piercing eyes. When he first honoured Boulogne with his presence, it was noted that he wore his hair fairly long, and had a full moustache, and a long heavy beard. Since then, however, he had shaved off his beard and moustache, cut his hair perfectly short, dressed *à la Française*, and in general appearance posed as a Frenchman, for which he would have passed very well. If he was really desirous of doing that—and it was reasonable to suppose that he was—there was an incongruity in the name he had adopted. Benjamin Smith was by no means suggestive of French origin. I further learned that this remarkable gentleman—who for some potent reason was anxious to no longer be identified with Captain Edward St. John, formerly chairman of the

Never-Fail-'Em Silver Mines," which existed only on paper—was in the habit of crossing pretty regularly to England. This was very suggestive, for it could hardly be supposed that he made frequent trips across the Channel for the sake of his health. He was actuated by some very different motive; of that I was sure. So it came to pass that on one occasion, all unknown to him, of course, I was a fellow-passenger, and I shadowed him to Liverpool, and to one of the best houses in the best quarter of the great shipping town. That house was occupied by a widow lady named Southwaite and her two unmarried daughters, Hester, aged about thirty, and Fanny, aged twenty-six or seven. Mrs. Southwaite's husband had been a ship's chandler, and in that capacity had amassed a fortune, so that when he died he left his family exceedingly well provided for. Mr. Benjamin Smith's object in visiting at that house was as a suitor for the hand of Hester Southwaite, an exceedingly genteel and good-looking young woman.

This little discovery was a revelation, but it was only the key to a still greater one.

Mr. Smith spent three days at the house on that occasion, and then he took his departure once more for Boulogne. A couple of days later I called upon Mrs. Southwaite, and sent a message to her that "a gentleman wished to see her on important business." She consented to receive me, and I was shown into a handsomely-furnished room to await her pleasure. I had not to wait long before the door opened, and a stately lady, neatly attired in black, and wearing a white cap with grey ribbons, presented herself, and inquired what she could do for me. The lady was Mrs. Southwaite, a well-preserved, fresh-looking woman, with whom the world seemed to have agreed amazingly well. Her

whole appearance suggested a contented mind and financial circumstances that rendered no thought for the morrow necessary. It was quite a pleasure to look upon her well-proportioned figure and smiling, contented face; but a pang of sorrow disturbed me as I thought that fate was preparing a jagged shaft wherewith to wound her. It will be gathered from this remark I was of opinion that Mrs. Southwaite and her family were victims of the adventurer around whom I was striving, as a matter of duty, to wind an unbreakable legal chain. All the details of the case pointed too surely to that fact, for I had ascertained that the Southwaite family were of the highest respectability, against whom no breath of scandal was ever breathed. It is never a pleasant duty for any one to be the bearer of evil tidings, more especially when one is almost morbidly sensitive to the wrongs and sufferings of others, as I was, and am. For though my calling has familiarized me with the very worst aspects of human nature, I have ever been ready to weep with those who weep. However, in the case I am dealing with it was my stern duty to save an innocent and confiding family from the machinations of a villain; for could there be a shadow of shade of doubt that that fellow, who had styled himself Captain Edward St. John, and now had gained entry to this peaceful family circle under another name, was a villain doubly dyed?

"I understand, madam," I began, "that you are acquainted with a Mr. Benjamin Smith."

"Oh, yes," she said, with a satisfied smile that indicated no suspicion that anything was wrong. "Do you know him?"

"In a certain sense, yes. But I am anxious to make some inquiries about him in a business way, and perhaps you will kindly answer one or two questions."

"Of course I will, if I can," she said; "but may I ask what your object is?"

"I will make my object plain to you in due course if you will kindly allow me to proceed in my own way; and let me assure you that my purpose is a perfectly legitimate one. Have you known Mr. Smith long?"

"A little more than a year, I think."

"Where did you first meet him?"

"In Geneva. My daughters and I were making a tour through Switzerland, and in Geneva we stayed in the same hotel as Mr. Smith. We found him a most agreeable gentleman, and he accompanied us to Chamounix and Zermatt."

"You knew him at that time as Mr. Benjamin Smith?"

"Certainly," she exclaimed, with just a slight suspicion of sharpness, and an indication in her expression that her suspicions were aroused.

"Was he travelling alone?"

"Of course he was."

"His mother was not with him?"

"His mother! He has no mother, as far as I know."

This was another link forged, but I merely remarked—

"Well, perhaps I am mistaken."

"I am sure you are, for if his mother had been living he would surely have acquainted us with that fact. He is, as I understand, a wealthy and childless widower, and, with my sanction and approval, he is paying his addresses to my eldest daughter Hester, and they will be married shortly."

"One other question, madam. It is a delicate one, but necessary. Is your daughter entitled to any money?"

Mrs. Southwaite looked at me with a searching,

inquiring glance, and seemed greatly distressed now, as she began to fear there was something wrong.

"I think, sir," she said after a pause, "that before answering your question, I have a right to know who you are, and by what right you put these questions?"

"Certainly you have," I answered. "I represent the law——"

"The law!" she exclaimed, with an agonized look.

"Yes, and, distressing as it is to have to disenchant you, it is my painful duty to inform you that there are very strong reasons indeed for believing that Mr. Benjamin Smith is an unprincipled adventurer."

I thought she would have fainted as I said this, but, recovering herself by an effort, she exclaimed indignantly—

"This is a serious matter, sir; and unless you have proof positive that your accusation is well grounded, it is little short of baseness to carelessly blast my child's happiness, and blacken the character of a man whom, at present, I consider to be an honourable gentleman."

"I admit the full force of your remark," I said; "but, unfortunately, there is no room to doubt that I am correct. Frankly, I am a detective, and I have for a long time been gradually collecting evidence that the person styling himself Benjamin Smith is a scoundrel, against whom there is a heavy reckoning."

With a little shudder of horror, Mrs. Southwaite burst into tears, and, covering her face with her handkerchief, wept bitterly. It was really pitiable to see this sudden change from smiling contentment to racking distress, as the poor woman saw cherished hopes and dreams thus blighted and shattered. I consoled and soothed her as best I could, and when she had to some extent regained her serenity, she said—

"This is dreadful, horrible, and I fear will have a crushing effect on my dear Hester."

"Better that the revelation should be made now than later on. Your daughter will feel the blow, but she will recover. Now, will you tell me, please, if you have ever heard that Benjamin Smith was formerly known as Captain Edward St. John?"

"Yes; he told me that himself. Indeed, he was staying in Geneva under that name. He said it was his family name, but, in order to please the whim of an eccentric old uncle, who promised to leave him a large sum of money, he took the uncle's name—that is, Benjamin Smith—and he wished henceforth always to be known by that name."

"A plausible story, but an utterly false one," I replied, and feeling a sense of relief that the ice was now well broken, and the first shock over. The rest would be more easy to bear. "Mr. St. John, *alias* Smith, is a villain, and I am afraid that more than one dark deed will be laid to his charge. But now, you can aid the course of justice if you will frankly tell me all you know."

"I have little more to tell you," she answered, with a sob. "I almost blush to confess that we have been far too lax, and have been so fascinated by this man's manners, that we have taken all he has told us for gospel. I remember now that when he first began to pay attention to Hester he was particularly anxious to know what her fortune was, and when he heard it was a little over two thousand pounds per annum he seemed delighted, but was anxious to impress upon us that he cared nothing for her money, as he had plenty of his own, and could surround her with luxury. Now, however, in the light of what you have said, his conduct and

apparent disinterestedness assume a very different complexion, and little circumstances to which hitherto I had attached no importance appear in a very different light."

"Do you know why he lives in Boulogne?" I asked.

"Certainly—well, that is, he has always told us he had a flourishing business there."

I could hardly repress a sigh as this poor lady thus betrayed how gullible she was. At the same time, as she was neither wanting in intelligence nor common sense, it was obvious that Smith, or whatever he chose to call himself, was a man of unusual plausibility.

"Let me assure you in the most positive manner," I said, "that he has no business whatever in Boulogne, and inferentially from what I have now learnt, he has chosen that as his temporary residence in order that he may be as near you as it is safe for him to venture. But if he had succeeded in trapping your daughter, I have no hesitation in prophesying that he would soon have shifted his quarters farther afield."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Mrs. Southwaite, "he always said that as soon as he was married he intended to travel with his wife, and would probably go to China and India."

"It is more probable now that he will go to penal servitude, but I must ask your co-operation in the stern business of bringing this rascal to his deserts."

"I will do all I possibly can," she answered sorrowfully.

"Very well. Then I consider it of the utmost importance that you will not give him the slightest inkling of this interview, or that anything detrimental to him has come to your knowledge. You will pledge yourself to this?"

"I will. But he has promised to come here again in the course of the next fortnight. What am I to do? I cannot allow him to see Hester again. She will be heartbroken, poor girl, though she had better know the truth now than later."

"I do not imagine that he will have the opportunity of seeing her again," I said, "for, if I am not much mistaken, I shall be in a position to effect his arrest when he next sets foot on English ground; and it strikes me that when the truth is all known he will stand revealed as the very king of scoundrels."

It would have been strange if Mrs. Southwaite had not been deeply affected by this sudden interruption to her plans. I do not mean to say that she had any mercenary or other unworthy motives in consenting to an alliance between her daughter and the man they both considered to be an honourable and upright gentleman. She was not the first woman who had been deceived by the specious arguments and the plausibility of a smooth-faced scoundrel. But there is little doubt, judging from her manner, that she had looked forward to the marriage with keen eagerness, believing, as it was right to assume, that it was to her daughter's happiness and welfare. The discovery that she had been deceived produced the most intense distress and sorrow, and being undesirous of intruding further on that sorrow, I took my departure, leaving her to break the news to her poor daughter in the way that would seem to her best. I felt now that I had made a very considerable advance towards the ultimate end, when, having placed the manacles of the outraged law about the villain, whose villainy had caused so much woe, my task would finish. In seeking to accomplish that I had endured a great deal, but I could not be blind to the fact that I had still much

to do before the curtain was drawn aside and all the mystery was revealed. I had still to learn who Benjamin Smith really was; who his pretended mother was, and what had become of her; and who the dark and silent Jacques Favre was, and what his *rôle* had been in the startling and thrilling drama. To learn these things, it was important that I should return to Boulogne, and this I did without loss of time; and recognizing the importance of having the co-operation of the French police, I waited on the Prefect and laid the whole case before him. At first he seemed reluctant to take any steps until I had more of what he termed "tangible evidence" to go upon; but I was enabled to convince him that there could be no possible doubt of Smith's rascality, and in the interests of law and order his career should be stopped. Fortunately, Monsieur le Prefect was amenable to reason, and he gave me a letter to the chief of the police, who promised me every assistance, and placed two experienced detectives at my disposal. In conjunction with these men, I concerted a plan of action, which seemed to me calculated to furnish very important results. It was this—during the absence of Smith and Favre, we should effect an entrance into the house, and ransack it in search of the evidence we wanted. The suggestion was approved of, and a favourable opportunity was eagerly waited for. Smith took his departure at last for England, and a sharp-eyed French police officer was instructed to follow and not lose sight of him. Then a watch was set on "Jacques the silent," who had repaired to his favourite *café*, and all being ready, we went at night to the house, and by means of duplicate keys gained an entrance. All was dark and still, and I hurried eagerly and anxiously from room to room in search of the old woman who was

supposed to be Smith's mother, and who was known to have entered the house, but had never been seen to leave it. It seemed as if the search would be fruitless, for there were no signs of a living soul save ourselves being under the roof. At last, however, as I stood on the top landing, I fancied I heard a faint groan. From that landing, a flight of wooden steps led to what is called in France a granary, and is peculiar to some old-fashioned French houses. It is what we should call an attic, but in France it is generally used for the storage of wood and other things. Mounting the ladder, I found that entrance to the granary was barred by a door, which was secured by means of a big padlock and a staple driven into the door-post. By the aid of a poker used as a lever, we succeeded at last in drawing that staple, and thus gaining access to the room; and as we flashed our lights into it, a strange and horrible sight met our gaze.

On a heap of mouldy, dirty straw was a gaunt, sunken-eyed, starved-looking woman, who seemed to be a mere skeleton. A few rags only clothed her nakedness, and they seemed dropping to pieces. Round her waist was an iron band, and to this was a heavy chain, which was securely attached to the wooden beam overhead, so that the wretched creature could not move more than a yard from the spot where she was lying. Her emanciated body was covered with sores and vermin, and she appeared to be in the last stage of starvation. Her hair was snow-white, her face wrinkled like an aged monkey's, and her skin like parchment.

She made no sign of consciousness as we entered, and I feared that her lips were for ever sealed, and the valuable information she would be able to give us would have to remain untold. Fortunately, we had noticed in

the dining-room a bottle of wine on the sideboard, and one of the men rushed down for this, and when he returned, we poured small quantities of the wine down the poor creature's throat, until at last she gave signs of returning life, and although dazed at first, she murmured two or three times—

"Save me, save me!"

Need I say that I was resolved to do that if it could be done, and I and my colleagues set to work to free her from the chains. In the absence of proper tools it was a difficult and tedious task. But patience and determination can accomplish much, and at length we succeeded. She was far too weak to stand, and too exhausted for speech. But we sustained her with more wine, while one of our number hurried as fast as he could go to the hospital for an ambulance stretcher. As soon as this was forthcoming, we conveyed her with all speed to the hospital. Fortunately, the hour was late and the night dark, so that we were enabled to accomplish our task without attracting attention. The doctors, who at once examined her, declared that she was suffering from starvation, and that her recovery was doubtful, but steps were at once taken to restore her strength and increase her vitality.

In view of our discovery, the police felt justified in laying hands on Jacques Favre, and they effected his arrest just as he was staggering home from the *café*. He offered no resistance, and did not even seem surprised. Possibly it was that he was too much sodden with absinthe. He was safely lodged in the lock-up, and Smith's house was placed in charge of two gendarmes. On the following morning I received notice from the hospital authorities that the old woman had so far recovered that she was rational, and, though very weak,

capable of conversing. Consequently I lost no time in repairing to her bedside, in company with the Prefect, the chief of the police, and two or three other officials, who, in accordance with French law, were required to be present during an examination of the kind.

Although the old woman had improved, she still looked ghastly ill, and begot fears that she could not possibly recover entirely. Taking our seats at the bedside, I proceeded to put a series of questions to her.

"You are better now?" I began.

"Yes," she answered faintly.

"We want you now to tell us who you are?"

"My name is Marland," she began, and, then becoming faint, restoratives had to be administered. As soon as she was better I said queryingly—

"You are the mother of the man who has been known as Captain Edward St. John, and who now calls himself Benjamin Smith?"

The change that came over her at this question was remarkable. Her face lighted with an expression of fierce anger, and she seemed suddenly endowed with new energy and strength, as, raising herself on her elbow, she pointed her finger at me as she exclaimed—

"The man calling himself Captain Edward St. John is Philip Marland, and I am Philip Marland's wife."

My companions looked at each other in amazement at this announcement, but for my own part I had suspected it, and was therefore prepared for the revelation, but I certainly was not prepared for what followed.

"You are his wife, you say," I remarked. "When were you married?"

"I was married in Birmingham some years ago. I went from my home in Bristol on purpose to be married."

"You lived in Bristol, then?"

"Yes. I was the widow of Captain Hulcup, the owner of the brig *Crimson Cloud.*"

"Captain Hulcup claimed to have discovered some mines in Yucatan, did he not?" I asked, with keenly aroused interest, as the strange plot began to thus unravel itself in a way that one could hardly have imagined.

"Captain Hulcup discovered large deposits of silver, and brought valuable specimens home. He intended to keep his discoveries to himself for a time, but he and his nephew, Philip Marland, did not get on very well together. Philip was always quarrelling with his uncle, and threatening that if he didn't give him money he would make the situation of the mines public. They made up their differences, however, and set sail for Mexico for a fresh supply of silver, and to see if some arrangements could not be made for systematically working the silver deposits. But my poor husband was drowned going down the Bristol Channel, and the *Crimson Cloud* was wrecked in St. Ives' Bay."

The old lady here became weak and faint again, and more restoratives had to be administered; but it was some time before she could resume her narrative, which had become absorbingly interesting, and began to let in light where all before it had been dark. I had got the thread of the plot now, and began to work it out for myself. But I had better let Mrs. Marland tell the strange story in her own words.

"Some months after his uncle's death," she continued, "Philip began to worry me to let him have the silver ore which he knew I possessed. But, as my husband had not left me very well off, he having spent a great deal of money in his trips to Yucatan, and in fitting

the brig out for the second mining expedition, I determined to keep the silver, and sell it as I required means. Seeing that he could not prevail upon me to let him have the ore, my husband's nephew began to make love to me, and after a while offered to marry me. I was a foolish, stupid woman, and my head was turned at the thought of having such a young and handsome husband. So I became his wife, and having got possession of the silver ore, he at once took steps for the formation of a mining company. He got mixed up with a lot of sharpers, and by their advice he changed his name to Captain Edward St. John. Very soon he began to treat me with neglect and cruelty, and on two or three occasions he tried to take my life. But I was weak, and forgave him. I accompanied him to this place, and one night he stupefied me with drugs, chained me up in the loft, and kept me without food, being aided in his wickedness by Jacques Favre, whose real name, however, is Jules Simon."

"Who is Jules Simon, *alias* Jacques Favre?" I asked.

"He was formerly one of my first husband's sailors, and was in the brig when she was wrecked in St. Ives' Bay.

"Do you know anything further about him?"

"No."

"Nor why he has associated himself with Marland?"

"No, except that there is some devilish villainy between them."

The foregoing was in substance the story the unfortunate Mrs. Marland had to tell. Its telling took a much longer time than one would suppose from perusing this narrative, for the woman was so physically exhausted that she had to make frequent pauses. She

bore unmistakable evidence of the horrible treatment she had been subjected to, and there is little doubt that she had only just been rescued in time.

Our attention was now turned to Jacques Favre, or Jules Simon, which proved to be his real name, but at first he seemed to be of very different stuff to the old woman, for neither threats nor commands could induce him to open his mouth. So, knowing that he was in safe custody, I hurried off to England, having received telegraphic information from my spy as to where Smith was to be found. He had gone straight from Boulogne to London, where he lingered for two or three days, and when I came up with him he was in the act of leaving for Liverpool, and I arrested him on the platform of Euston Station. He had evidently been totally unprepared for thus being overtaken by justice in the very hour of his supposed triumph, for his amazement and chagrin rendered him speechless. He had gone on so long with apparent impunity, and had flourished to such an extent, that he had, no doubt, come to look on detection as a very remote contingency, and scarcely worth thinking about. Moreover, the goal towards which he had pressed for so long was in view, and the prize seemed his. But Nemesis overtaketh him who doeth evil let him speed never so well, and in this instance the proverb was very forcibly verified.

As I conveyed my prisoner into a place of safe keeping I could not avoid a feeling of intense gratification, which, under the circumstances, was, I think, quite pardonable; for I had gone through a very great deal and suffered in mind and body in my endeavours to solve the problem set me. So, now that my efforts were crowned with success, I experienced a sense of elation that could not be stifled.

Having got over his first feeling of surprise and mortification, the prisoner made it clear that he was going to make a desperate fight for his liberty. Of course, he was not aware of my mission to Peten, nor how I had tracked him step by step in his career; and being ignorant of how much we knew, and as it was evident he was still in possession of money, he engaged the services of a big firm of lawyers and an eminent Q.C. As time went on, however, it soon was made clear that the links of the chain I had forged were infinitely too powerful to be rent asunder by any amount of legal sophistry, and the "eminent Q.C." betrayed indications of a belief he entertained that his client hadn't a leg to stand upon.

And now matters took another and more serious turn. Under the inquisitorial system of the French law in criminal cases, the prisoner, Jacques Favre, was forced into a confession that old Captain Hulcup was murdered by Marland and himself. The old man was felled to the deck by a blow dealt with a marling spike wielded by his nephew; and while he was still breathing Favre tossed him overboard. Then the two villains concerted to cast away the ship, and drown the rest of the crew, as some of them loudly expressed suspicion of foul play.

This additional chapter of dark doings gave a new sensation, as may be supposed, to as thrilling and weird a story of human wickedness as was ever told in a court of law; and if Marland had really entertained any hope that he would succeed in baffling justice, he must have experienced a sickening sense of despair when he learnt that his colleague in sin had betrayed him. Although a charge of murder was preferred against him, it had to be abandoned, as no other evidence was forthcoming save the bare statement of the wretch Jacques Favre, though

morally it was absolutely certain that the tale he told was substantially correct. But though Marland escaped on the capital charge, he had to stand his trial for obtaining large sums of money on false pretences, and he was ultimately sentenced to penal servitude for twenty years. Others of the directors were tried, and received varying terms of imprisonment. At the same time that he was standing his trial in England he was tried *in absentio* in France for attempting to murder his wife by starving her to death; and Jacques was indited as an accessory. They were both sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, so that if Marland lived to complete his term in England the French authorities would make application for his extradition.

Mrs. Marland had suffered so much that she never was able to leave the hospital at Boulogne, and died in the course of six months. I never heard anything more of the Southwaites, but they must have congratulated themselves on having escaped as easily as they did from the toils Marland had spread for them.

THE STORY OF A PEARL.

One day an Indian pearl-diver brought up from the bed of the Indian Ocean, off Ceylon, a monster gem, that was destined to affect the fortunes of a number of people in a very strange way. When it came to be detached from the shell that held it, it was pronounced by experts to be one of the most perfect pearls in the known world, and the value put upon it was almost fabulous. It became the property of Gamage & Lallal, the well-known dealers in precious stones, whose head-quarters are in Bombay. When it had been subjected to certain processes known to the trade, by which its irridescence and beauty were enhanced, it was put upon the market. That is, Gamage & Lallal allowed it to go forth that they were prepared to part with the gem to the highest bidder. But before the highest bidder had an opportunity of making his bid the valuable pearl disappeared in a most mysterious manner. At the close of business one evening—according to the testimony of Gamage & Lallal—it was locked up with other gems in a strong room—that *was* a strong room, which expression is meant to imply that the room was considered an unusually secure one, and calculated to defy the skill of the most expert burglar. Well, the following morning the pearl had gone. Nothing else had been touched, though there were tens of thousands of pounds' worth of other jewels; and to add to the mystery, the room was intact. The door had not been tampered with, and the wonderful and complicated locks were all perfect. It

might be thought by the uninitiated that entrance to the room had been gained by means of false keys, specially manufactured by some one who knew the secret of the mechanism; but it was next to impossible that this could have been done, and for this reason. The room, roughly speaking, was about fourteen feet square. It was solidly concreted, and the walls were eighteen inches thick. In the centre of one of the walls was a massive iron door; so massive, indeed, that it was said a ton of gunpowder exploded against it would hardly have made any impression. Perhaps that was an exaggeration, but there is little doubt that it was of unusual thickness and solidity. This door fitted into an iron frame that was strongly embedded in concrete. Into this frame the tremendous bolts shot. There were forty-two bolts in all, and they were all shot at one time by means of a lever in the centre of the door. Set into the door was a register dial, which showed that the door was properly locked, and this dial would have indicated any attempt to tamper with the locks. But this does not exhaust all the precautions that were taken for safeguarding the precious treasures committed to this remarkable chamber, which was said to be absolutely fire and burglar proof. Although one action of a lever locked the door, the mechanism was so peculiar and ingenious that no less than eight different keys were required to unlock it. Nor was this all. By a still further ingenious arrangement the locks could be readjusted every day, so that a fresh set of keys were required each morning to open the safe, and no one but the two principals of the firm knew which set was required. It will thus be seen that altogether the structure of the strong room was unique, and well calculated to resist human cupidity, cunning, and skill. Nevertheless, the

magnificent gem was stolen, to the horror and consternation of its legitimate owners, who at the time were negotiating with the then Czar of Russia for its purchase.

That the pearl had been stolen admitted of no possible doubt, and the mysterious manner in which it disappeared caused quite a sensation. Both of the principal members of the firm were emphatic in declaring that they both saw the gem safely deposited in the strong room, and both saw the door locked immediately afterwards. The pearl had been placed in a small box on a bed of cotton-wool, and the box was covered with a glass lid. The following morning, however, the pearl was gone, but box, glass lid, and cotton-wool were intact. Bearing all these facts in mind, it almost seemed as if the thing had been spirited away by supernatural agency.

Naturally enough, Messrs. Gamage & Lallal—who were, by the way, both Parsees—inclined to the belief that some of their *employés* had been concerned in the robbery. But these *employés* all told only numbered six, five of them being natives, the sixth being a Frenchman named Eugène Valjean, who was renowned as a diamond-cutter and polisher. In his own particular line he was said to be one of the most skilled workmen in the world. He had been with the firm for ten years, and bore a very high character. Against him nor the native workmen could a shadow of suspicion be justified, and so the affair remained a mystery, and was to remain so for a very long period.

As may be supposed, Gamage & Lallal took every means conceivable to trace the missing pearl, but without success. Neither the offer of a large reward nor the employment of some of the best detectives of the day

availed aught. The gem apparently was irretrievably lost, and its owners had to bear the loss as philosophically as they could. Neither partner was destined ever to know in this world how the robbery had been effected, for in the course of five or six years they had both paid the debt of nature, dying within a short period of each other.

The scene now shifts to Europe. It was the height of the London season, and as two foreign potentates were the guests of Her Majesty there was an unusual gathering of rank and beauty in the British Metropolis. One night these two Royal visitors attended the opera at Covent Garden. It is seldom, even in London, that such a brilliant and dazzling scene is to be witnessed as the theatre presented on that eventful night. Apart from the ordinary attractions, a young and beautiful singer was to make her *début* in *La Favorita*, and report spoke of her voice as something marvellous; nor did report err in this instance, for that young girl has since become one of the most famous singers the world has produced. In the annals of the theatre, that night must ever stand out as unique. Wealth, literally by millions, was represented, and if the world had been ransacked for beautiful women no greater display could have been obtained. Rank, fashion, riches, and beauty were concentrated under the roof; while the general effect of the great gathering—the lights, the decorations, the flashing of jewels, the wondrous dresses, the combination of colours—was to positively bewilder one with its radiance and brilliancy. One seemed to grow almost drunk with the unwonted magnificence.

It was my good fortune to witness that never-to-be-forgotten scene, but little did I think then that it was to be the prelude, so to speak, to a strange drama, in which I was to play a prominent part.

Amongst the galaxy of beauty which crowded the house from floor to ceiling was the Countess de Flourét, who occupied a central box on the second tier, and close to the box occupied by the Royal guests. The Countess was a very conspicuous member of society, for she was said to be one of the most beautiful women in the world, and she had had a somewhat romantic history. Her maiden name had been Malpas, Ada Maplas; she was the only daughter of a Mr. Malpas, who began life in a humble position, and rose to be one of London's merchant princes. Ada was wooed and won by a French Count of high and noble family, but very poor. He had squandered a large fortune, and had led a somewhat riotous life; but he was a singularly handsome man, and though her parents objected to him Ada insisted on becoming his wife, and not wishing to stand in the way of her happiness—for she had declared that the Count was absolutely essential to her happiness—her father waived his objection, gave his consent to the marriage, and settled a large fortune upon her. Six months later the fashionable world of London was startled on learning that the beautiful Countess and her handsome husband had separated.

Of course there was a nine days' wonder and a nine days' scandal. The evil-minded and the vicious hinted at all sorts of things, but it was generally conceded that the Count was to blame, and that no one could justly cast an aspersion on the fair fame of the lady.

For some time following the separation she was not seen in society, and it was rumoured that her happiness and peace of mind were shattered. If such was really the case, she must have quite recouped and recovered, for when she reappeared she bore no external traces of her

trouble. She became a bright particular star, and her satellites were to be numbered by dozens.

On the night at the theatre she was radiant with health and beauty, and being still on the right side of twenty-five she had everything in her favour. Although there were many beautiful women present, the young Countess attracted general attention, for amongst that fashionable gathering the story of her unhappy wedded life was well known, and, of course, she was an object of interest. It was noted that she wore a profusion of magnificent diamonds, and on her white throat lay a superb brooch, consisting of one great pearl surrounded with a cluster of brilliants.

When the performance was over, the Countess, in company with her friends, made her way along the corridor and down the grand staircase to the main entrance, where she had to wait for some time before she could get her carriage. On a special occasion of this kind there was necessarily a great crush, and more than ordinary confusion. At length, however, everybody got away. The brilliant throng was dispersed. The lights were extinguished, and silence reigned. The Countess resided when in town in Park Lane, where she rented a splendid little mansion. Her mother lived with her, her father at this time being dead, and she also had staying with her as a companion a cousin named Florence Fenton, a young girl of about nineteen. She was an orphan with no money, but being only a little less beautiful than her cousin, there was the prospect before her of a good marriage.

On arriving home the Countess, to her consternation, found that her magnificent diamond-set pearl had disappeared. Word was immediately sent round to the stable that the carriage was to be searched, as there was

a probability that the brooch had fallen off while the Countess was riding home, but the search proved fruitless; the gem was not found, and as early as possible next day the Countess telegraphed to me to call upon her, which I did without loss of time. It was the first occasion on which I had come in personal contact with her, although I had often seen her in public, and a more charming, more beautiful woman I don't think I ever had to deal with. With tears in her eyes she told me of her loss, which she said had so affected her that she had not slept a wink all night. If that was really the case—but perhaps it was only intended as an everyday figure of speech—she certainly looked none the worse for it; neither the brilliancy of her eyes nor her superb complexion was in the slightest degree impaired by the sleeplessness. When she had given me the details as I have set them down here, she said—

"You know, Mr. Donovan. at first I was quite disposed to think I must have dropped the brooch, but now I am perfectly convinced it has been stolen, for I remember that when I came down the stairs of the theatre there was a tremendous crush, and a young, dark-complexioned, foreign-looking man kept close to me all the time, and jostled me so rudely that I was nearly speaking to my friends about it. In the entrance hall the crush was terrible, for every one was struggling to see the Princes depart, and to my surprise I noticed that the dark man was still at my elbow. I looked angrily at him, and, with a polished bow, he said, 'Countess, the circumstances of the hour have thrown us together, and your beauty has drawn me like a magnet.' This impertinence made me still more angry, and I was going to bring his conduct under the

notice of my friends, but at that moment a lady fainted, which added greatly to the confusion, and, taking advantage of that, the fellow slipped away."

"Had you ever seen the man before, Countess?" I asked.

"Oh, no, not to my knowledge. I had never set eyes upon him."

"Do you think it probable that the brooch after all was dropped in the carriage during the journey home, and fell into the hands of some of your stable people?"

"I would stake my life that is not so," she answered emphatically.

"Can you give me a description of the man who annoyed you at the theatre?"

"Certainly. He was foreign in appearance, and spoke with a foreign accent. In height he would be about five feet seven; in build slight. Age probably under thirty; six or seven-and-twenty, maybe. He had a very swarthy complexion, bushy, dark eyebrows, a small, dark moustache, and very dark hair, closely cropped in the French style. Oh, by the way, I must not forget to mention that on the upper part of his left cheek he had a small, livid scar. It looked to me like a sword or dagger cut."

"You draw a very good picture of the man," I remarked, "and I hope that we may be able to trace him. Now, as regards the lost article, will you kindly describe that?"

"It is a pearl set round with Brazilian brilliants, which in themselves are valuable; but they are paltry compared with the pearl, which is said to be one of the finest in the world."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I really don't know what it's true value is, but I believe many thousands of pounds."

"Did you buy it?"

"It was given to me by my husband before we were married. It is such a costly gem that I have very rarely worn it, except on such occasions as last night."

"Such a gem as you describe ought to have a history, Countess," I remarked. "Do you know anything about it?"

"No; my husband never told me anything about it. But he asked me to wear it as little as possible, and not to let it be generally known that I possessed it, as attempts might be made to steal it on account of its unique character. At that time it was unset, and I had it photographed. I will show you the photo." She went to her cabinet, and, producing the photograph, handed it to me. I certainly was astonished at the size and apparent beauty of the gem. It was oblong and as large as a good size horse-bean. It was fixed, for the purpose of photographing it, in a pair of velvet-covered tweezers, which stood upright on a velvet cushion. The pearl was thus thrown into bold relief, and its size and shape were admirably depicted, though, of course, its irridescence and colour were not there. "That shows the gem," the lady continued, "as it was when it was given to me. Subsequently, at my father's suggestion, I had it set round with the brilliants. The jeweller who did it told me that it would rank amongst the first twelve finest pearls in the world, and that its history ought to be known. After that I questioned my husband about it, but he either could not or would not give me any information. Subsequently, when differences unfortunately arose between us, he wished

to take the pearl away from me again, but I would not let him have it, and for some time my poor father kept it in his possession."

"One more question, Countess," I said. "Do you know where your husband is?"

"No; I haven't the remotest idea. I did hear that he had expressed an intention of going to America, but whether he has gone or not I really cannot say."

Furnished with the foregoing particulars and a copy of the photograph, I took my departure with a growing feeling that the stealing of the gem was the outcome of a conspiracy. At this time, let it be understood, I did not know anything concerning the wonderful pearl beyond what the Countess had told me, but it was clear to my mind that it had not been stolen by any ordinary thief. What I mean by that is this. Assuming for argument's sake that the foreigner who had jostled the Countess in the corridor and on the staircase of Covent Garden Theatre was really the thief, he must have been used to moving amongst the better class of people, otherwise he would hardly have been in the most expensive part of the theatre on one of the most fashionable nights of the season. When I considered all the circumstances as I gathered them from the Countess, it certainly did suggest itself to me that the robbery must have been well planned beforehand. Then again, a mere common pickpocket or brooch-snatcher would assuredly have known that there would be a great difficulty in getting rid of such a valuable brooch, and that any attempt to sell it in the usual way would of a certainty lead to detection. The ignorant street-prowler would never have run such a risk as the stealing of that brooch involved, because, though he

might have been successful in getting possession of it, it would prove a dangerous white elephant to him, and he would be perfectly well aware that he could never trade it.

These reflections served to convince me that the robbery was not a spontaneous one, but a deliberately-planned affair, and the thief in all probability was one of a gang of swell mobsmen who did not stoop to trifles, but flew at high game, and had ways and means, no doubt, of dealing with their spoil which would not be known to the lower order of thieves and rogues.

Although I certainly did consider it all but superfluous, I took steps to learn something about the coachman and groom in the service of the Countess, for, supposing that the brooch had been dropped in the carriage on the way home from the theatre, one of these two men might have found it. My investigations soon convinced me, however, that there was not the slightest grounds for supposing that they knew anything about it; indeed, they were of that stamp that if such a valuable article had come into their possession they could not have failed to have betrayed themselves by some indiscreet act. They would have no knowledge of its true value to begin with, and assuming that they had found it and been dishonestly inclined, there were a thousand chances in favour of their immediately trying to raise money on it by pawning it or offering it for sale to some jeweller, and such men endeavouring to dispose of so valuable a piece of jewellery would at once have aroused suspicion. They would have been called upon to give an account of themselves, and detection would have been certain.

I have already stated that at this stage of the affair I knew nothing of the early history of the gem, but its great value rendered it highly probable that the pearl

was known to experts and gem dealers, and I took immediate steps to bring the loss under the notice of the trade. I had the photograph reproduced, and sent it out broadcast to the principal dealers throughout Europe; and in the course of a few days I received a letter from the famous dealers of Berlin, Herren Wildstrubel & Goldstein, in which they informed me that they had every reason to suppose the missing pearl was the one that had originally belonged to Gamage & Lallal, of Bombay, and which had so mysteriously disappeared from their strong room.

This information put a different aspect upon the affair altogether, and I took immediate steps to ascertain all the details of the early robbery, and those details I have given at the commencement of this narrative. Supposing, therefore, that the pearl was the identical one which had been stolen years before from the Bombay dealers—and all the circumstances pointed to such being the case—in whose possession was it during the interval? Somebody must have had it. Who was the somebody? It was absolutely certain it had not been traded in the ordinary way; otherwise it could have been traced.

The whole affair was certainly a pretty problem, a complicated puzzle, and interested me deeply. I felt that it devolved on me to endeavour by every possible means to learn the story of the pearl from the time it was so mysteriously taken out of the strong room at Bombay. There certainly was mystery there, and I felt that if I could only clear away that mystery I might, step by step, follow up the career of the pearl until I should be in a position to restore it triumphantly to its legitimate owner. But this naturally suggested a most important question. Who was the legitimate owner? In one sense the Countess de Flourét was. She at least

had not acquired it dishonestly. It was given her by her affianced husband, but it would be necessary to determine how it came into his possession. If he got it honestly, how did the person from whom he procured it get it? It will thus be seen that a very wide range of inquiry was opened up, and it was only by going from stage to stage, and by gradually filling in all the blanks of the story, that one could hope to be successful in the quest of the missing gem, which, according to all accounts, was worth a king's ransom.

While I did not ignore what was extremely probable, namely, that the thief or thieves had been actuated by the sole motive of gain, I felt sure that they would not endeavour to sell the pearl then, for the simple reason that the hue and cry had already been raised. The loss suffered by the Countess had, of course, found its way into the papers, and, being good "copy," it had gone the round of the country. Every little pettifogging sheet in the kingdom had got hold of it, and it had also been copied extensively into foreign papers. How it had gained publicity was not easy to tell, except it was that the Countess had talked about it to her friends, and some one or other had mentioned it to some one else who had a press connection. My own desire had been to keep the matter as quiet as possible in the hope that the thieves might be tempted to offer the pearl for immediate sale, and thus be trapped. With this end in view I carefully avoided mentioning in the official circulars and intimations to the dealers the name of the person from whom the gem had been stolen. But in spite of my efforts to keep it dark, the papers got hold of it, and so it was given broadcast to the world. It was hardly possible to suppose that the thief or thieves would remain in ignorance of this publicity, and they

would never be such fools as to run their heads into the lion's jaws. So far as the diamonds were concerned they might, with comparative safety, negotiate them, and they would probably do so; but the pearl was another matter. It was far too conspicuous, and its shape could not be altered by so much as a hair's breadth. It could not, like any other precious stone, be cut, for any attempt to alter it would of a surety lessen its value immensely, if it did not ruin it altogether.

In considering all these facts I was sanguine of running the thief down and recovering the gem, although I could not be indifferent to the many difficulties that lay in my way, for if, as I suspected, the robbery was the result of a conspiracy, it argued that the conspirators were men of unusual cunning and boldness, and would not readily betray themselves. My first serious step towards the end I aimed at was to obtain some particulars of the Count de Flourét, for it was of the very highest importance that he should be asked to state how the pearl came into his possession. In order to get the information I wanted, I once more waited upon the Countess at her residence in Park Lane.

I found that she was somewhat reluctant to talk of her husband, which, perhaps, after all, was only natural, for necessarily a domestic affair of that kind was a very delicate subject. It was clear, however, that she was intensely embittered against her husband, and could not refer to him without betraying signs, not only of great emotion, but great anger. By the exercise of tact and patience I gradually learnt from her that she had first met the Count at the house of a French lady of title, residing in London, but who was now dead. She fell passionately in love almost at first sight with the Count,

who had an extraordinarily fascinating manner with him, and in spite of many stories that reached her of his shady career, she was weak enough to resolve to marry him; for love blinded her to his faults, and she turned a deaf ear to the stories. Soon after the marriage he began to show himself in his true colours, and she bitterly repented her hastiness. She tolerated him as long as she could; but at length matters became so bad that she was bound to separate from him. On his marriage he was heavily in debt, and her father paid his debts, but he only began to contract fresh ones, and Mr. Malpas refused to let him have any more money. He then began to sell some of his wife's jewels, and this led to serious differences; and one thing he was particularly anxious to obtain was the pearl he had presented her with. She resolved, however, that he should not have it, and for safe keeping placed it in charge of her father. Beyond the time when the Count took himself off for good, the Countess could give no further information about her husband, as all connection between her family and his family had ceased.

Furnished with the foregoing particulars, I next proceeded to the London agents of the Indian firm of Gamage & Lallal. Both of these gentlemen were dead, as I have already stated, but the business was still carried on by relatives of the deceased. The London agent was a Mr. Spieglemann, a German, whose place was in Piccadilly. My object in visiting him was to obtain, if possible, further particulars of the mysterious disappearance of the gem years before from the strong room in Bombay. Mr. Spieglemann not only confirmed all I had heard, but gave me some additional details which apparently heightened the mystery which surrounded the robbery. It appeared that a few weeks

after the robbery he was in Bombay, and had an opportunity of examining the place for himself. He told me that, having regard to the strength of the room and the extraordinary precautions taken for safe-guarding the treasures it contained, he was utterly at a loss to suggest even a plausible theory of how the gem was abstracted after it was locked up.

"Do you think it was really locked up?" I asked.

The question seemed rather to startle him, and he looked at me with a strangely-puzzled expression of face. But after reflecting for some time he answered—

"Oh, yes. There is no doubt about that. Both Gamage and Lallal told me that they saw with their own eyes the door locked and the indicator mark that it was secure."

I asked him if he could furnish me with even a rough sketch of the mechanism of the door, and he said he could give me something more than a rough sketch. He could let me have almost an accurate drawing of it; for, being a draughtsman and of a mechanical turn of mind, he had been greatly interested in the mechanism, and had made some notes at the time, as he wanted to test for himself if it was possible to unlock the door after it was once locked with any other than the proper keys. But though he had studied the problem for a long time, he could come to no other conclusion than that it could not be done, and so the mystery remained a mystery still as far as he was concerned. He promised to let me have the drawings in the course of two or three days, and I took my leave, with my mind a blank at that time so far as any theory was concerned with regard to the manner in which the original robbery had been carried out. One thing that I was satisfied about was that no attempt was likely to be made for some time

to dispose of the pearl, as the thief or thieves would be fully alive to the danger they would run in trying to sell it after the wide publicity that had been given to the affair. I therefore waited patiently for the promised plans, which came in due course. They were delivered to me late one evening, and I at once set to work to study them. For many hours and far into the night I pored over them until my eyes ached and my brain throbbed. I felt, however, that my labour had not been useless, for though I could lay no claim to any mechanical skill, I had an eye for possibilities, and I saw, or imagined I saw, a means whereby the door could have been opened.

Without an intricate set of diagrams it would be by no means easy to convey to my readers' minds an idea of the machinery which governed the locks, but one thing that struck me was this—the designer had been a little over-ingenious. What I mean to say is that too much reliance had been placed on the indicator to give warning when the bolts were shot. I fancied that I detected a way whereby the indicator could be so tampered with, that it could be made to falsely declare that the door was properly closed. This idea haunted me all through my sleep, and I did nothing but dream about it.

The next morning I hied me to a young fellow whom I knew, and who was an exceedingly clever mechanic. He had for a long time been employed in the construction department at Woolwich Arsenal, and his genius and ability had secured him rapid promotion. I showed him the plans, and asked him if he could undertake to construct for me a working wooden model from the drawings, and, after studying them for a while, he said he thought he could do so. He worked away at it

for many hours every night in his own time for three weeks, and then he brought me a model that was a triumph of imitative and constructive skill. Within a very short time after that model came into my possession I felt disposed to cry out "Eureka!" for the shadowy idea I had, had resolved itself into a practical fact. By what was an exceedingly simple arrangement, having regard to the complicated mechanism, the bolts could be stopped from going into the sockets, and yet the indicator could be made to show that the door was locked as usual; and, therefore, any one relying simply on the indicator would be deceived. In short, it was a case of one brain inventing an exceedingly clever puzzle, and another brain finding out the solution of it. The inventor had overlooked one important fact, which was that by disconnecting certain levers the bolts would cease to act, and yet the indicator would work. Somebody had discovered that to be the case, and had applied his knowledge with such effect that he had been able to possess himself of the treasure. Unless my theory was the correct one, it seemed as if nothing short of some supernatural agency would have enabled the thief to get into the strong room. As I had no belief whatever in supernatural agency, I felt convinced that Messrs. Gamage and Lallal had been deceived by the indicator; and while thinking that they had locked the door in reality, they had not done so. The reader will at once see what an important bearing this discovery of mine had upon the case, for it might enable me to trace the gem from the time it was abstracted from the safe to the time it came into possession of the Countess. And if I succeeded in doing that I might go further and follow it until I was able to restore it to the Countess, if, in the eyes of the law, she was entitled to claim it.

I have previously stated that at the time the pearl was stolen from Gamage & Lallal they had only one European in their employ. This was a Frenchman named Eugène Valjean. Now, by a natural process of logical deduction, my suspicion fixed on him as the thief; notwithstanding that he had been many years in the employ of the firm, and bore a high character. One of my reasons for suspecting him was that being in the trade and having an intimate knowledge of the markets, he would probably see his way clear to disposing of the pearl, whereas any of the natives would have been at a loss what to do with it after they had got it. Then, again, Valjean was a fellow-countryman of Count Flourét, and though on the first blush it may seem like straining a point to connect the two, a little consideration will show that there were many chances—logically speaking—in favour of a connection remote or otherwise.

Acting on these premises, I set to work to try and trace Valjean; though before doing so I went over to Paris to make some inquiries about Count Flourét. I found that he was the black sheep of his family, and a very black sheep too, from all accounts. From an early age he seemed to have led an exceedingly wild kind of life, and had been a source of grave anxiety to his relatives. Possessed of a singularly fascinating manner, a most refined bearing and gentlemanly appearance, coupled with unbounded assurance and impudence, he had been enabled to keep up a style of living quite incompatible with his means. At one time his family had been very well off, and the owners of extensive estates in various parts of France, including a somewhat noted vineyard in the Champagne district. Gross extravagance, however, and riotous living on the part of

successive inheritors led to the estates passing into other hands, and the living representative of the family came to an empty title only, and most of his kinsfolk were at this time engaged in business of different kinds. But the Count had never shown any disposition for work. He preferred a life of idleness and luxury; and, presuming on the family traditions, he had endeavoured to pose as a gentleman of position, but he had been guilty of transactions which, to use an exceedingly mild term, were shady in the extreme. It is true that he had managed to escape bringing himself within the grasp of the law; but if only half of what I heard was true, he ought to have been in penal servitude. To instance one case, before marrying Miss Malpas he paid his addresses to a wealthy middle-aged French lady, who was almost old enough to be his mother. She became so enamoured of him that she gradually gave him large sums of money. At length, getting tired of his prevarication and constant postponement of the anticipated marriage, she tried to bring him to book, whereupon he flatly refused to continue the connection. Her friends were desirous that she should bring an action against him to recover the money she had advanced, but she declined to do this, and retired to a convent. Some months later he went to London, and made the acquaintance of Miss Malpas.

Furnished with all the foregoing particulars, one question forced itself upon me in a very prominent way. It was a question that would have occurred to any one acquainted with the fact that the Count was in a state of chronic impecuniosity, and had exhausted nearly every legitimate means of replenishing his empty exchequer. The question was this—How did he procure the magnificent pearl which he presented to Miss Malpas?

The market value of the pearl was so great that it was absolutely absurd to suppose that a man like Count Flourét, who had neither money nor credit, could have come into possession of the gem honestly. At any rate, not one single grain of evidence could I get that would tend to show it was probable that he might have purchased it. As a matter of fact, none of his relatives knew that he had the pearl or had given it to his bride-elect. It will be seen that the case was one of mystery from beginning to end, but as I had cleared away part of the mystery in suggesting a very rational theory to account for the pearl disappearing from Gamage & Lallal's strong room in Bombay, I was justifiably sanguine of being ultimately successful in throwing light where all was now dark, and not only filling in the blanks in the history of the gem from the time it left the original owners' possession to the time it was given to Miss Malpas, but of recovering it. Of course I directed my inquiries to trying to find out what part of the globe the Count was then honouring with his presence, but in this I was for the time baffled. I could not come across any one who could give me the slightest clue to his whereabouts; nor could I trace the man so ably described by the Countess Flourét as the one she suspected of having stolen the pearl on the night of the opera, and whom she believed to be a foreigner. She spoke of his being very swarthy, and having a small livid scar on the upper part of the left cheek. Notwithstanding that I widely circulated a description of him, his trail was not picked up. If this man was really the thief, it tended to confirm my theory that the robbery was the result of a conspiracy in which the Count was a prime mover; and I could not avoid a feeling that if I could come across Eugène Valjean I should be able

to get at the kernel of that conspiracy. Valjean, as I have said, had gained renown in the trade as a diamond cutter and polisher. The art of cutting and polishing a diamond is a very delicate operation, requiring skill of no ordinary kind; and men who are unusually clever at it are in request. Relying on this fact, therefore, I deemed it probable that if Valjean was living I should be able to find him, so I set to work accordingly, and pursuing inquiries in the proper quarters I learnt in the course of a few weeks that the man I sought was in the employ of the celebrated Dutch firm of gem-dealers, Loopuyt & Co., of Amsterdam. I soon confirmed this, and at once resolved on a plan of action. Now, assuming that I was right in my supposition that Valjean must have had something to do with the original robbery, it was not likely he would commit himself if he could help it, and therefore I had to fall back on a stratagem. It became necessary, of course, that I should take Loopuyt & Co. into my confidence; and though they were much astonished and shocked at the imputation cast upon their workman, Valjean, they recognized the importance of the matter, and decided to render me all the assistance possible. I therefore suggested that I should assume the character of a workman, but therein a difficulty arose. All the workmen employed in their gem department were, of course, skilled men, and as I had no skill of any kind in that line, my ignorance would soon have betrayed me, and my object been thus defeated. It chanced, however, that at this time they were building a small smelting furnace, and I at once undertook to impersonate an ordinary labourer, and, as I had some knowledge of the Dutch language, I had little doubt but I could pass muster, although they seemed to think I should experience great difficulty in

scraping acquaintance with Valjean, whom they described as a singularly reticent and quiet man, who kept to himself, and never by any chance spoke of his past. He had a reputation of being miserly and penurious in his habits, although it was rumoured that he was well off; and though very clever indeed in his own particular line, he was not generally liked.

Shakespeare says that one man in his time plays many parts, and perhaps the successful criminal-tracker plays more than most men. In my time the characters I have been called upon to assume by the exigencies of my calling have been not only varied but numerous; but this was the first time in my life that I had had to play the *rôle* of a bricklayer's labourer. It certainly was not a pleasant *rôle*, but my duty and my devotion to my calling outweighed all other consideration, and I put personal feelings on one side.

The smelting furnace that was being put up was in the workshop where Valjean had his bench, and I at once resolved upon a plan that was calculated to aid me in my work. It was my good fortune to be able to speak French like a native, as my early years were passed in France, and I turned this acquisition to account. Valjean was a Frenchman, and the only one in the establishment. It was therefore natural that he should be disposed—he being a foreigner in a strange land—to look kindly on a compatriot. After all, there is a trait of ineradicable patriotism in the human breast, and whether we be black or white, yellow or red, savage or civilized, we like to meet a countryman when we are away from our native land. I had on several occasions in my career passed as a Frenchman, and I was confident of succeeding on this occasion. Nor was I mistaken. I scraped acquaintance with Valjean. I

told him I had fallen on evil days, having at one time occupied a much better position. Although he might be termed a hard and unsympathetic man, he expressed commiseration with me in my misfortune, and the result was I tacked myself on to him, as the saying is. I very soon learned something of his habits, and found that he went every evening after his day's work to a *café*, where, having dined, he spent the rest of the evening in playing chess, a game he was passionately fond of. As I had some knowledge of the game I was enabled to play with him, and thus strengthen the acquaintance.

This went on for a fortnight, at the end of which time I left the ostensible employment, the work being finished. The leaving was part of my scheme, for, having made the acquaintance of Valjean, I had so far accomplished what I undertook, and now, in the character of an unemployed labourer, I was in a better position to trade on Valjean's feelings and lay a trap for him. It will be understood, of course, that, in the event of my surmises and theories being incorrect, the trap would be of no use, and my little plot would prove fruitless. But I had started on the assumption that Valjean had had something to do with the original robbery of the pearl, and on those lines I worked, content to leave time and circumstances to prove me right or wrong.

The part I now took up was that of a class-hater. I railed against those who had means while I had none, and I queried why I should have been born to a heritage of hard work and poverty, while so many other men enjoyed wealth and luxury. My arguments and railings did not seem to make much, if any, impression on the undemonstrative Valjean, and, as they failed to draw him out of his shell, I went on another tack; and one

evening as I was sipping coffee at his expense in his favourite *café*, I bewailed my fate bitterly, and exclaimed—

"I wish to heaven I was back in India again."

"Have you been in India?" he asked, with a sharp inquisitiveness that was unusual with him.

"Yes," I said carelessly.

"What were you doing there?" came the query with scarcely less sharpness.

"A relative of mine, who had been a sailor, settled on shore in Calcutta as a ship chandler, and he sent for me."

Valjean's interest seemed to have passed now, and he asked listlessly—

"How long ago is that?"

"Well, now, let me see. Well, I was there at the time that that strange robbery took place in Bombay, when the pearl was stolen from, from—I forget the name of the people."

At my words a new expression came into Valjean's face, and he turned his dark eyes upon me. The expression was that of a keen and vivid interest, but in a moment it faded away, and he remarked languidly—

"Ah! it was a funny thing that."

"Yes; I remember it was the talk of India. I wonder how the job was done. People used to say the very devil himself must have committed the robbery."

Valjean laughed mockingly as he answered—

"A very human devil, I should think."

"But did you ever hear the story of the robbery?"

"Oh, yes. It was a thing bound to be talked about amongst my class. I heard all about it."

"You know then, of course, that the safe where the pearl was kept was of peculiar construction?"

"I've heard say so."

"And that it couldn't possibly be opened without the proper keys?"

Valjean smiled again.

"Look here," he said, "do you think it possible that one man could invent a lock that another man couldn't open if he set to work in the proper way?"

I pondered for some moments, then answered—

"It's very likely there are fellows clever enough to do anything."

"Yes, I should think so," Valjean remarked, with a certain air of self-assurance and something like grumpiness in his tone.

This little dialogue was pregnant with a great significance. It will be noted that during the whole of the conversation he made no reference to his having been in the employ of Gamage & Lallâl at the time of the robbery. Now, an honest, conscientious man would surely have mentioned such a circumstance, and his not having done so was, to my mind, the strongest confirmation I could have had that he had potent reasons for concealing it.

So far, then, I had gained a great point, and it certainly did seem to me that my theories were correct and my suspicions justified, particularly so when taken in conjunction with the discovery I had made that the mechanism of the door of Gamage & Lallal's strong room could be so manipulated as to cause the indicator to show that the door was locked, when, as a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind.

There was a pause in the conversation between me and my man, and then suddenly I exclaimed, as if I had been pondering on the subject—

"I wonder what became of the pearl that was stolen. By Heaven, I wish I had been in that swim!"

Once more Valjean fixed his dark eyes upon me, and once more the self-satisfied smile that seemed peculiar to him spread itself over his face as he answered—

"And if you had been, what then?"

"What then! Why, I should have had my share of the plunder."

"Would you?" he remarked, with a significant intonation.

"Yes, why not?" I asked, looking very simple and surprised.

"For this reason," he said, with a certain incisiveness, "you would have no plunder, because there was no market for the gem."

"No market!" I exclaimed, still keeping up the expression of puzzled simplicity.

"No, there was no market," he repeated, "and for this reason—the wide publicity given to the affair made it almost impossible for the thieves to sell the pearl. You see a pearl is not like a diamond. You can cut a diamond, and so alter it that it cannot be recognized, but to touch a pearl with a view to disguising it would be to ruin it. That particular pearl was unique, and the big pearls of that nature in the known world can be counted on the fingers."

"Ah, I see," I mumbled reflectively. "Then, as a matter of fact, the thieves must have retained possession of the pearl since it was stolen?"

"I expect so," he answered, in a way that made it obvious he intended the answer to be a prevarication.

As I did not think it wise to pursue the subject further then, I allowed it to drop, but I had been furnished with a good deal of food for reflection; and while my suspicions were in no way lessened, I could

not just then find any satisfactory theory to explain what connection there was between Valjean and Count Flourét. If I could only solve that knotty point I felt that I should advance the case most materially, but there was the difficulty. At last, however, I determined on a bold move, and relied upon my astuteness, which had been quickened and trained by long experience, to determine whether I was right or wrong. I wanted to find out if Valjean knew Count Flourét, and this was the way I went about it.

One evening as Valjean was playing chess as usual in the *café*, I entered without his observing me, and, going up cautiously behind him, I bent down and whispered so that his companion might not hear—

"Do you know where Count Flourét is?"

Valjean had one of the chess men between his fingers at the time, he having just captured it from his opponent, but he was so startled by the unexpected question that he let the piece fall on to the board, knocking over several others. The colour fled from his face; his eyes glowed with the light of a suddenly aroused fear, and he stammered out as he recognized me—

"What—no—I—who the devil is Count Flourét!"

He had given himself away. Under certain circumstances, the face is an unfailing index to the mind. It was so in Valjean's case. It unmistakably declared that he lied with his lips.

He showed no disposition to say one single word more on the subject, but he was affected in altogether a remarkable manner if he was innocent, for his lips trembled, as did his hands, and he displayed such an utter want of presence of mind and command over himself that he muddled the game up, and it had to be

abandoned. I had obviously touched a spring which had caused one, at least, of the secrets of his brain to show itself. I had gained a triumph. Valjean did know Flourét. I should have been prepared to have staked my life on it.

Valjean's companion, whom I did not know, rallied him on his confusion, and Valjean endeavoured to account for it by saying that he had come over very sick, and gulping down a cup of coffee that stood near him, he rose, put on his hat, and said curtly—

"I'm going into the open air."

From that night he studiously avoided me, which he would not have done if he had been a man of readier resource, but he was conscious of having committed himself, of having fallen into a trap, and he brooded over it to his own disadvantage.

So far, then, I had unravelled some of the tangled threads, and made the all-important discovery that Valjean knew the Count, though there was still much more to unravel, but my original theory of a conspiracy was marvellously strengthened. Of course, I asked myself how the Count had become possessed of the pearl. Had he bought it from Valjean? If so, how did he obtain the money for its purchase? Then there flashed upon me what seemed a most logical answer to these questions. Valjean himself had stated that there was no market for the pearl as stolen property owing to the publicity given to the theft. What, then, was the result of this? Valjean and Count Flourét were acquainted. There was some subtle connection between them. The Count had taken possession of the pearl in order to present it to Miss Malpas, hoping thereby to strengthen his position as a suitor for her hand. It was an indirect way of selling the gem, for probably he considered that

he would be able to exact large sums of money from her, and, with equal probability, Valjean had stipulated for certain payments. The Count, however, by his own stupidity, had killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, but, by the aid of a third person, had once more repossessed himself of the gem by stealing it from his wife. All this seemed so perfectly feasible that I did not attempt to construct any other theory. I was content to work out this one until I saw good reason to abandon it, and, unless such reason declared itself, I felt sure I should succeed in my task.

Having concluded to my own satisfaction that Valjean knew the Count, I resolved now to shadow him in the hope that he would unconsciously betray to me the Count's whereabouts. What little I had seen of Valjean led me to infer that he was not the man to lose his hold on the Count if the latter was still in possession of the pearl.

It was about three weeks after that eventful night when I had betrayed Valjean into playing into my hands that I learnt he was going away for a few days. During those three weeks I had scarcely lost sight of him, and now, like his attendant shadow, but all unknown to him, I followed him whither he went. He took train to Brussels, and in Brussels I was with him. It was Saturday when we left Amsterdam. It was Sunday when we were in the Belgian capital. He took up his quarters in an unpretentious and quiet hotel and restaurant, and in the course of the afternoon he was joined by an old man with a clean-shaved face, long white hair, and his eyes covered by blue spectacles. The two of them went off into the public gardens, where they strolled up and down one of the walks in close and earnest conversation, stopping every now and then to

gesticulate in a very animated way, and then resuming their walk.

At length, as the shades of evening were falling, they returned to the *café*, where they dined, and then over cigarettes and coffee they fell to discussing some knotty point again *sotto voce*. Being able to record these little details, it follows that I witnessed them. But if these two men had suddenly confronted me, they would only have seen an old man with a silvery beard, of clerical appearance, and apparently half blind, whose fading eyes seemed to be looking into futurity, and who appeared to take no interest in things mundane. As a matter of fact, they did not see me; they never got a glimpse of me. I was particularly careful about that. Into the *café* I went in a very unobtrusive way, and in a corner that was but dimly lighted I ensconced myself, and, using English as my language, I ordered coffee and a cigar, and then as I smoked, and seemingly dreamed, I watched them with half-closed eyes. I was not within earshot, but I was close enough to be able to make a study of the stranger, and that study led me to the conclusion that he was youth aping age, and badly aping it.

It is well known as a pathological truth that the human hands are the first part of the body to show advancing years. Even while the face remains plump the hands will lose their roundness, the skin become more or less puckered and wrinkled, and the veins will stand out prominently and show their blueness. Of course, in this, as in everything else, there are exceptions, but in a general way it is strictly accurate. Now, as I studied the stranger with the long white hair and the blue spectacles, I particularly noted his hands. They were plump and white; certainly not the hands of one upon

whom the burden of years pressed. Whenever I felt called upon to play the part of age, the better to aid Justice in her quest for wrong-doers, I was always most careful to so manipulate my hands that they did not belie me. But this man had evidently forgotten that wise precaution, and I was not deceived by his appearances of age. He was not an old man at all. He was a young one. I was convinced of it. He had disguised himself, for reasons just then best known to himself, though who he was I could not of course determine. One thing, however, had by certain signs and details made itself manifest to me, and it was that these two men had not come together for the transaction of legitimate business. They were both inveterate smokers, and cigarette after cigarette did they roll and smoke; and sundry coffees and *petit-verres* were consumed until near midnight, when they shook hands and parted; and the blue-bespectacled and white-haired individual went forth into the street, and forth went I also, intent on determining the residence of this interesting stranger with whom it was desirable I should make closer acquaintance. I followed him to the Rue Royal, saw him enter a house which I carefully noted; and concluding that he lived there, for he could hardly be visiting at that hour of the morning, and as there was nothing more to be done just then, I went home to my hotel and to bed with a sense of having made considerable progress, and a feeling that the ravelled skeins were not so ravelled as they were some days before.

On the Monday the interesting Monsieur Valjean took train back to Amsterdam, and when I had seen him out of the city I turned my attention to the no less interesting stranger of the Rue Royale, who had been indiscreet enough to leave his hands young, while he

had given his face and hair the semblance of age. In the course of that day I had ascertained that he was known as Monsieur Paul Roget, and had occupied apartments in the house for some weeks; but what his profession was, what his means were, or where he came from, was not known. He seemed to be well supplied with money, and paid his way. That Monsieur Paul Roget had something to conceal, I felt perfectly convinced of, and I made up my mind to know a good deal more about him before I left Brussels.

The apartments he occupied were situated in a large substantial stone building, with balconies before all the windows in the front part of the house. In the flat above him I was enabled to secure two rooms, which I took for a month. My front room was over his front room, and my balcony over his balcony. I had studied these little details beforehand, and saw potentialities that might lead to great results. For instance, from my balcony I could reach his balcony by means of a small rope ladder. It was an acrobatic feat requiring a little nerve, for the upper balcony was about fifty feet from the ground. But that was a mere detail which in view of the interests involved I did not allow to trouble me. What I thought was if I could get on his balcony occasionally, many things might be revealed to me. It was chill autumn weather, the end of autumn when things were ripening to their death; and the chill winds and saturated fallen leaves gave an air of mournfulness to the town. In warm fine weather people usually sat on their balconies in the evening; but at this time windows were kept closely shut, and the warmth of the stoves was comforting and grateful.

So far, then, all this was in my favour, and I watched and waited for developments. One afternoon, as I sat

at my chamber window, I saw a fiacre drive up to the door, and a lady and gentleman alighted. There was nothing very extraordinary in this bare circumstance, for a great many people lived under that roof, and a vehicle at the door was a common sight. But what arrested my attention was a quantity of luggage piled up on the vehicle, and on some of the luggage I could distinctly see the labels, which read—"London (Charing Cross) to Brussels. Registered." That little legend stimulated my alertness, and I began to speculate who the new-comers might be. I had only caught a glimpse of the lady and gentleman as they descended from the carriage, but that glimpse had satisfied me that the lady was well dressed and young, if she was nothing else, while the gentleman was red-haired—I noted that—and was attired in that painfully ridiculous way affected by a certain class of British tourists. He wore low shoes, stockings of a hideous mixture of brown and yellow, knickerbockers, a short monkey jacket, a small pot hat, and coloured spectacles. His face in detail I could see no more than I could see the lady's face, but I came to the conclusion that they were unmistakable Britishers wedded to their insular prejudices, and not averse to making guys of themselves while on the Continent. In short, I imagined them to be a somewhat superior "'Arry and his gal" on their honeymoon tour, and having thus summed them up, I dismissed them from my mind for the time being, but I thought that for the satisfaction of curiosity, if for no other reason, I would learn later on who the lady and gentleman were.

The afternoon following their arrival I was enjoying a cigar at my watching post—*i.e.*, the window—from which I could see a great deal without the fear of being seen, for I was high up, near the roof, and could look

down on the world below me, taking things in as from a bird's-eye view; and as I so sat I suddenly became aware that the lady and gentleman who had arrived the previous day were crossing the road—going from the house—and a third person was with them, that third person being Monsieur Paul Roget. This was a revelation. Instantly I rushed for my hat, tore down the many stairs, gained the street breathless, but only to find that the trio had disappeared. There were numerous thoroughfares going in different directions, and streams of people were passing to and fro. Therefore, there were so many chances against my hitting the right track of those I sought that I deemed it a wiser policy to return to my den and wait. The "Britishers" and Roget were acquainted. That, to my mind, meant mischief. The "Britishers" had a quantity of luggage, which I knew was in the house, so that they evidently intended to return; and I consoled myself with the reflection—"There is a 'morrow, and the 'morrow may reveal much." Then, lighting another cigar, I fell to pondering on the puzzle that had been given to me.

The night closed in, bringing rain. A sobbing, bitter night it was, as if nature was in tears and mourning for the dead glories of the summer. Having finished off some correspondence I was engaged upon, I closed my letters and prepared to take them to the post, and after that go to a restaurant to dine. When I reached the street I heard the great bell of the Cathedral toll out the hour of seven. As I crossed over to the other side of the street, I glanced up at Monsieur Paul Roget's window and saw it was illuminated—he had evidently returned home; and, forgetting all about any letters, I went back immediately to my own chamber, changed my boots for a pair of noiseless India-rubber shoes, donned a short

reefing jacket, got out my rope-ladder, attached it cautiously to the railing of my balcony, and then, getting over, went down to Roget's balcony, and then there was revealed to me a sight I had not calculated upon. In the room were four persons. They were Paul Roget, the red-haired man, and the lady, and a fourth person whom I had never seen before, but who was unmistakably of Hebrew descent. He had a sharp, aquiline face, with a large, an extraordinarily large, nose, and eyes beady and bright like unto a ferret's, while a mass of unctuous-looking, curly black ringlets added a picturesqueness to his general appearance; and had he been garbed in a long gaberdine, worn velvet shoes, and carried a pair of balances and a knife, he might have stood for a portrait of Shylock.

In the lady, to my amazement, I recognized the beautiful Florence Fenton, the cousin of the Countess Flourét; the red-haired man had a clean-shaved face, but on the upper part of the left cheek was a small livid scar, and by that scar I identified him as the man described to me by the Countess, and whom she suspected of being the person who stole the pearl. All this was a revelation, and thrilled me with an infinite sense of satisfaction, for the last of the tangled threads was now unravelled. But this was not all. The lost pearl was there too. A little box and some cotton-wool on the table spoke for themselves. The diamond setting had gone, but the pearl with the strange history was lying in the outstretched palm of the Jew, and he was critically examining it with the aid of a magnifying glass. It was a striking *dénouement* to a strange drama, though the drama was not quite ended yet.

I returned to my balcony with all speed. Drew up the rope-ladder; stowed it away; changed my

shoes for boots again, and hurried off to the adjacent gendarmie, where I invoked the aid of the police, which was cheerfully rendered, and, six strong, we hastened back to Paul Roget's apartments. The door was locked, but with the lack of ceremony peculiar to the Continental police, one of the men raised his heavily-booted foot, and with one tremendous lunge splintered the lock to fragments, and the door flew open with a crash. We swooped in, and found our prey almost as I had last seen them. With one shrill scream the lady fell in a swoon to the floor, and the men, ghastly pale with sudden fear, seemed to lose their presence of mind, and to become bewildered. Rushing forward, I tore the grey hair—an exceedingly well-made wig—from the head of Paul Roget, and revealed Count Flourét, livid with rage and disappointment. Then I sprang upon the red-haired man before he could make any resistance, and having deprived his head of its red covering he stood confessed as the man so graphically described as the Countess. In the Jew the police recognized a notorious person named Ezekiah Emanuel, who was known to have reaped a fortune as a "fence," and though he had suffered various terms of imprisonment he would not abandon the trade. The pearl, which was in the box on the table, was seized, and soon lodged in safe custody, as were also our prisoners.

It was sad and pitiable to see the beautiful Florence Fenton in such a position, and when she recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen she was frantic with grief. My next step was to telegraph to Amsterdam urgently requesting that Eugène Valjean might be arrested, and I thus had the satisfaction of knowing that all the actors in the remarkable plot were in my

power. The next morning I hastened to London, and obtained an interview with the Countess, who was much shocked to learn the part that her cousin had played. A fortnight before this Miss Fenton had picked a quarrel with her cousin and left the house, taking all her things with her. The man with the scar on his face turned out to be a fellow by the name of Henri Breton, who was distantly related to Count Flourét. Between Breton and Florence Fenton there had been clandestine meetings and correspondence. She had fallen desperately in love with him, and easily fell a victim to his machinations, he being in league with the Count, who had conspired together to deprive the Countess of the pearl, in the hope that they would be able to raise money upon it. Through Miss Fenton, her lover Breton was apprised that the Countess was going to wear the pearl at the opera, and thus the plot was worked out. Further and critical investigation made it clear that Valjean had originally stolen the gem from Gamage & Lallal, and that he had gained entrance to the strong room by manipulating the machinery exactly as I had surmised from a study of the plans and model. Having possessed himself of the coveted gem, however, he found that he could not dispose of it without the certainty almost of being detected. He therefore kept it for some time, and at last made the acquaintance of Count Flourét, who he soon found was an adventurer, living on his wits. He took the Count into his confidence as regarded the pearl, and the Count entered into an undertaking whereby he was to have possession of the pearl on paying a thousand pounds down, and five hundred pounds a year afterwards for ten years, unless in the meantime it was sold through the Count's efforts, in which case Valjean was

to have half the money. The Count gave Valjean a written contract to that effect, and the contract was found amongst Valjean's papers. By giving the pearl to his wife the Count hoped to get large sums of money from her. In this he was deceived, and when he separated from her he resolved to repossess himself of the gem by some means or other, and to that end he called Breton to his aid.

Miss Fenton, it came out, had played a very deceitful part, and showed great sympathy with Count Flourét. She kept up a secret correspondence with him after the separation, and it was by this means he brought her in contact with Breton, who being young, handsome, and fascinating, used his gifts to such advantage as to completely get her into his power. Thus the little plot was matured, and might have proved highly satisfactory had it not been for the good fortune which enabled me to mar it.

The case, as might well be supposed, gave rise to a great many legal complications, and the lawyers had a busy and profitable harvest out of it. The prisoners were tried in London, but, of course, Gamage & Lallal's successors put in a claim for the pearl, and succeeded in establishing their claim. All the accused persons were convicted, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, with the exception of Miss Fenton. A merciful view was taken of her case, and she was looked upon as having been more sinned against than sinning. She therefore escaped with the light punishment of a year's imprisonment. But the disgrace and burden of her sorrow was too much for her. She was as weak and frail as she was beautiful; and, unable to endure her remorse, she committed suicide in prison by puncturing a vein with a splinter of sharp beef bone which she had

managed to secrete. It was a sad ending to what might have been a bright and promising life, rich in the love of some honest man and affectionate children. The pearl which had had such a strange history was, as I ascertained, subsequently sold by its legitimate owners to the Emperor of Russia.

THE TAKING OF BILL THE BRUISER.

The mind that can take delight in witnessing suffering or cruelty in any shape or form is a remnant of the barbarous type which existed before so-called civilization had veneered over the savage. Yet, unhappily, such minds are comparatively common amongst us, even at the present day. Usually they are minds that have not been trained and cultivated by education and moral teaching, and where we find ignorance, there, generally speaking, we find brutality. This is very apparent amongst the untaught and undisciplined children of the poor, who seem to experience an almost fiendish joy in inflicting pain and suffering on the inferior order of living things. Such children almost invariably grow up brutal and depraved. I am, of course, aware, and am constrained to admit, for fear that I should be unjustly accused of partiality, that education and good breeding do not always eliminate the native elements of savageness, for amongst the upper classes, unhappily, are to be found men and women who are warm supporters of "sports"—saving the mark—which are a disgrace to our boasted civilization of the nineteenth century. Prize-fighting—in this country, at least—has always had many warm patronizers amongst the upper classes, who have been pleased to describe it as the "noble art." No doubt there is art in it, in the restricted sense of the word, but how a disgusting exhibition of two trained athletes battering each other to jelly can be said to be noble

is incomprehensible, save on that hypothesis that those who thus pander to and gratify their degraded tastes are desirous of finding an excuse for so doing. That such an exhibition had, and still has, a charm for certain people is unfortunately true, but since prize-fighting was declared to be illegal its patrons, for the most part, are confined to the offscourings of the country.

Some years ago a fight took place in a field in one of the Midland counties of England, which was destined to send a thrill of horror and disgust through the land, and do more to bring the "noble art" into disrepute than anything else had done for a long time. A fellow named Bob Turner, who was known to the "Fancy" as the "Nottingham Lamb," had long enjoyed the reputation—if enjoyment was to be got out of such a thing—of being the champion of the Midlands. Turner was an utterly uneducated ruffian, with a magnificent physique that might have been utilized to much better advantage than in battering his opponents into mincemeat. But he was a lazy vagabond, who preferred loafing and idleness to work, and he found fighting congenial to his brutish tastes. For a long time he had held the so-called championship, and had proved himself a match for anyone who dared to pit himself against him. In Sunderland, however, lived a man whose name was William Orme, but who was locally known as "Billy the Bruiser," from a habit he had of smashing into everything and everybody who didn't happen to please him.

In some respects Bill was a remarkable character. He was by calling a miner, and came of a race of miners. In build and strength he was a perfect Hercules, and this fact, coupled with a violent temper,

which was utterly unamenable to reason, made him dangerous and feared. Yet, there had been a time when Bill had played the part of a hero; his name had rung through the land, and praise and money had been showered upon him. He was working as a miner then, and was in the day shift in connection with a fiery mine in his neighbourhood. In this mine an explosion took place during the night, when two hundred and forty men and boys were below. The news ran like electricity through the village, and one of the very earliest on the scene of the disaster was William Orme, notwithstanding that he had been toiling laboriously all day. There was an upcast and a downcast shaft to the mine, and from the upcast shaft there was a mighty column of flame and smoke, which told too terribly of the awful work going on below. Women and children were wringing their hands, and filling the air with their lamentations, as they thought of their loved ones down in that fiery furnace. To hope that any of them could have escaped seemed out of the question, and something like a panic of despair seized upon the surging crowd that gathered about the pit mouth. Through that crowd Bill elbowed his way until he was able to mount a hillock of pit refuse, and thus emphasize his presence and make his voice heard; and as the lurid gleams of the fire fell upon his dark and grimy face, and the wreaths of smoke swirled about him, he stood out sharply defined against the night sky as the incarnation of daring and determination. "Mates," he thundered, in stentorian tones, "maybe some of th' chaps down in't mine have managed to reach th' pump, and can be rescued, and I'm going down to see what I can do." The daring, the boldness of this announcement fairly took the people's breath away, so that there was a solemn silence for

some moments, until it was broken by a mighty roar of a thousand voices united in one great cheer. But though no one there believed for a single instant that Bill had merely made an idle boast, there wasn't a child present but would have declared that to descend into the fiery pit was an utter impossibility. And yet, in spite of argument on the part of managers and banksmen, Bill began to strip himself of every atom of superfluous clothing. Then he wound a wet handkerchief about his mouth and nostrils, and going to the pit mouth, he stepped into the cage, and called on the engineman to lower gently. At first there was some hesitation to do this, but Bill would not leave the cage, and insisted on going down. At last the machinery was put in motion, the great wheels revolved, the cage commenced to descend, and as Bill disappeared from sight a groan broke forth from the crowd, for it was felt that that grand, heroic spirit had gone to a terrible doom.

There are moments of dread suspense and chilling fear, when minutes seem hours, and the hours are ages. So it was on this occasion. The great heart of the multitude almost burst from the strain that was put upon it, and the silence was painful in its intensity, save when a groan broke forth. At last, however, the signal cord was seen to work, and the bell in the engine-house sounded. Then slowly the engines commenced to revolve, and the people held their breath, and gazed with a fixed and stony stare at the pit mouth, wondering what would be revealed when the cage should emerge from the darkness and the smoke. At last the suspense was relieved. The cage came in sight, and there was Bill, grimy and scorched, but he was not alone. From the fiery death that had endeavoured to encompass them he had rescued two men and a

boy, and when it was known that they were alive there arose the thunder of acclamation until the solid earth shook. Although Bill was almost in a fainting condition, he insisted on going down again, for he said that he believed other "chaps" were alive. So, reviving himself with a draught of brandy and water, he once more went down into the fiery furnace, to reappear again in some ten minutes or so with three boys. Two were insensible, and the third was found to be dead.

These two boys, with the other boy and the two men who came up in the first case, were restored, and lived. Thus Bill had snatched five lives from the grasp of a cruel death, and by so much lessened the loss that the explosion caused. But in doing this he had almost fallen a victim himself. Apart from being badly scorched, he had breathed the dense sulphur-charged fumes into his lungs, and he was dragged from the cage in a collapsed condition. For many weeks he lay hovering between life and death, but his praises rang through the country, and a sum of money, between three and four hundred pounds, was collected and presented to him.

This act of splendid heroism stands out with striking incongruity when contrasted with the man's violent temper. It seems difficult to realize that such a man could have been capable of cowardice and brutality, and yet, as this narrative will show, he displayed both.

When he recovered from the effects of his brave deed he set to work to spend his money as fast as he could, and his temper seemed to get worse. The result was he committed a violent assault on a man during a drinking bout, and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. When he regained his liberty he showed less inclination

than ever to work, and his one ambition in life seemed to be to pit himself as a pugilist against Bob Turner, the "Nottingham Lamb." He had still upwards of a hundred pounds left, and he backed himself for this amount to beat the "Lamb" if he would meet him. Of course, Bill found plenty of supporters, and soon the affair assumed much larger proportions than it at first promised to do. A challenge was at length sent to Turner, whose laurels being thus in danger was bound to accept. And when it became generally known that the redoubtable "Nottingham Lamb's" challenger was the daring Sunderland miner, who had made his name ring throughout the length and breadth of the land by reason of a deed as self-sacrificing and as heroic as any man could be called upon to perform, the excitement was very great amongst the sporting fraternity, at any rate. Necessarily the people in the swim asked what hope "Bill the Bruiser," as he was called, could have of beating so scientific and such a well-trained pugilist as the "Nottingham Lamb," who in all his many encounters had scarcely ever been worsted. The knowing ones affected to sneer at Bill, and they predicted that he would be "squelched"—and "pulverized" the first round. But there were those who, being better acquainted with Bill, and having regard to his tremendous physical powers and his bulldog-like tenacity, said that the coming fight would jeopardize the laurels of the "Lamb." To find a parallel to the excitement and interest that this vulgar affair caused, one would have to go back at least half a century in the annals of Pugiana. Wherever men congregated —no matter what their rank—the chief topic of conversation for a time was the approaching fight. As the day drew near every ruse was adopted, and every

effort made, to keep the place of meeting a secret. At first it was said that Scotland had been chosen as the battle-ground. Then, that a lonely spot in the Cheviots would be the scene of the encounter. Various other places in turn were mentioned, but the knowing ones put their tongues in their cheeks and grinned. One thing was very clear, and that was that heavy betting was going on in all ranks of society; and though the "Lamb" was far and away the favourite, Bill found very many supporters; so that whichever side won, large amounts of money would change hands.

As the police had received notice that they were to do all they could to prevent the fight coming off, the managers of the affair had to exercise the greatest caution, and the date of the encounter was of necessity postponed from time to time. At length, by an artful and clever dodge, the wire-pullers succeeded in completely throwing the police off the scent. The dodge was nothing more nor less than this. For three or four weeks they caused to appear in the sporting and other papers mysteriously worded paragraphs, in which it was very plainly hinted that the "Great Mill" would come off at a place that had been selected in the New Forest, and on the day fixed for the fight three special carriages were engaged in the morning express running down to Southampton. These carriages were filled up with as rowdy a lot of ruffians as could have been found anywhere; while in the other part of the train was something more than a sprinkling of M.P.s and aristocratic idlers, who liked to say that they took an interest in "all manly sports." The daily papers were also well represented; and even some of the minor sporting journals were so far deceived as to send down men.

One would have thought from the open way in which all this business was done that the police would have smelt a rat, but it is no use denying the matter. They were thoroughly deceived, and apart from sending down half-a-dozen plain-clothes men, the authorities throughout Hampshire were notified, and requested to be very much on the alert, and do all in their power to break up the meeting.

Those who were responsible for this great sell must have laughed in their sleeves as they saw how thoroughly the police were thrown off the true scent; and while those who were thus being sold were travelling south, the principals, their backers, and a select gathering of "sporting gents," with a strong element of low-browed ruffianism, quietly and with as much secrecy as possible made their way to a field not a hundred miles from Nottingham. The spot was admirably chosen. The river formed the boundary line of the field—which lay low in a hollow—on one side, and a thick coppice was the boundary line on the other side. The nearest habitation was at least a mile away, and there was no public road near for quite half a mile. The approach to the field was by means of a narrow lane, which, having no outlet at the farther end, was a *cul de sac*, and the lane a private way for the use of the landlords and farmers of that particular part going and returning from their fields. It was an October day, as chill, raw, and disagreeable a day as even this country can show. A cold, dripping, clinging mist enshrouded the land, giving the country a weird, ghostly appearance. On the field of fight about five hundred men assembled, all heedless of the cold and the sodden atmosphere. The land was soft and slushy, and it was soon turned into a quagmire by the tramping of the many feet. When the comba-

tants stripped for the fray and appeared in the ring a murmur of approbation arose at their splendid physiques. Each man, it was stated, was in perfect condition, but "Billy the Bruiser's" patrons were loud in their praises, and they expressed keen satisfaction as they noted that in height, weight, and muscle Billy had everything in his favour.

It is not my intention to inflict on the reader the disgusting and harrowing details of the fight, as they were given in the leading sporting journals. Those who are curious about such matters can refer to the files of the papers themselves, and the most morbid of tastes can there be gratified. The men fought thirty-nine rounds, and from the first it was seen that the advantage was on the side of Billy, though one and all admitted that the "Lamb" displayed qualities of the very highest order. As the fight progressed, and the combatants warmed to their work, each suffered the most fearful punishment, though the "Lamb" decidedly had the worst of it, and frequently he staggered and grew faint under the sledge-hammer blows of his opponent. The "Lamb" not only made a gallant bid for victory, but when he had become blind, and his features had assumed the character of blackened pulp, and two of his ribs were broken, he still refused to admit defeat, and still came up to time, standing defiantly before the burly brute from the north, whose giant powers, aided by good training, had enabled him to thus wrest the long-held laurel from the Nottingham favourite.

In the thirty-ninth round both men showed signs of exhaustion, but in the "Lamb's" case the exhaustion was extreme. Nevertheless, although it was now

perfectly obvious that the battle was hopeless for him, he resolutely refused to own to defeat, and, for the last time, faint and staggering, faced the giant, who with one mighty blow straight from the shoulder sent the wretched fellow crashing to the ground, stricken to his death, like an ox in the shambles. The victory for the Sunderland man was now complete, and the blackguards and the bullies who had laid their money on the "Lamb" howled with rage and disappointment; while the backers of the victor expressed their delight no less ferociously. This seemed to be the signal for a pitched battle, and for some minutes the scene beggars all description. Shouts, groans, yells, curses, filled the air with a diabolical din, and no mercy was shown, no quarter was asked. So fierce and eager was the struggle that no attention was given to the fallen and defeated pugilist, and when a doctor, who was on the field as a spectator, did manage to get to him, he found that all human aid was useless, for Bob Turner, the "Nottingham Lamb," had played his last part, had fought his last fight, and was dead. When this became known a determined attempt was made to get at Billy, whose friends were trying to take him from the field. Every effort, however, was used to frustrate this on the part of the defeated ones, and two fellows seized him, with what intention was never made clear. But they forgot how dangerous it was to tease a wounded lion. Mauled and weakened as he was, "Billy the Bruiser" rose like a veritable giant whom his enemies sought to shackle, and with an unfortunate blow he knocked the life out of one of his antagonists, and laid the other low in the mire. Then arose a cry—a false one as it turned out—that the police were coming, but it was sufficient to terrify the bloodthirsty and brutal mob, and they

scuttled away like startled rabbits. Bill was smuggled off and disappeared, and in a little time some of the defeated party returned, and held a council of war amongst themselves as to what was best to be done. It was decided at last that, as it would not do to leave the two dead bodies lying in the field, information had better be given to the authorities. This was done by the medium of a farmer's boy, who was pressed into the service, and at once a number of policemen started off for the field of action, only to find that all the birds had flown, while the bodies of two men were lying in the mud, and a third man had crawled beneath a hedge, where he was groaning in agony. The dead men were at once borne away, and the injured ruffian was attended to.

As a great many of the fellows who had assisted by their presence at the disgusting exhibition were well known arrests were made wholesale. As is generally the case, the majority were labourers of some kind—miners, navvies, railway-porters, loafers, a sprinkling of shopkeepers from the neighbouring towns who had sporting proclivities, and who liked to support their fancies. All these people were ignorant and illiterate, many of them being quite unable to write their own names. But culture and intelligence were also represented, for two members of Parliament, three members of aristocratic families, several reporters, and a local squire, who was also a J.P., were called upon to answer to the law for being accessories to the fact. Of course, in view of the death of the two men, the matter assumed a very serious aspect, as a charge of murder could be preferred and possibly sustained against every person who had been present, for the assembly had been an unlawful one, and not even the palliation of self-

defence could be urged as an excuse for the killing of the victims in the brutal affair. It can be well imagined how tremendous was the excitement when the news spread; and the strong sporting tastes of the neighbourhood led to hostile demonstrations against the police. It seemed, indeed, at one time as if a serious riot was imminent, and it became necessary to make a strong show of force in order to overawe the "gents what took a hinterest in the noble hart," as they were described enthusiastically by a little cobbler who had staked his "bit" on the "Nottingham Lamb," and now found himself not only minus his money, but called upon to answer a very grave offence against the law. Although "Billy the Bruiser" had managed to get away, it was thought at first that he would speedily be arrested. It was absolutely necessary, of course, that he, as one of the ringleaders, should be taken, and no doubt was entertained that in a very little while he would be safely under lock and key; but they who so reckoned did so without their host, and, as is generally the case, the reckoning was found to be entirely out. Twenty-four hours elapsed and not a trace of Billy could be found. Aided by a few staunch and faithful adherents, he had managed to completely elude the vigilance of those who were on the look-out for him, and no tidings of his whereabouts were forthcoming.

It need perhaps scarcely be remarked that amongst the unlettered portion of the community all those who were under arrest were regarded as martyrs; for amongst these untutored savages—they were really little better—a prize fight was considered a perfectly legitimate affair, and it was looked upon as an outrage on the liberty of the free-born Briton to interfere with his amusements,

and stop him from indulging his tastes according to his inclination. Even amongst the friends and backers of the "Nottingham Lamb" this feeling prevailed, notwithstanding that they were bitterly incensed against the "Bruiser" for having so completely upset all their calculations. The clamour increased as the days passed, and Bill still remained at large. Those who had been sent on a wild-goose chase to the New Forest, and so completely sold and deceived, were very fierce in their denunciations of the "Bruiser"; for, smarting as they were from a sense of having been made fools of, they wanted somebody to vent their rage against, and no one could serve that purpose better than the absent Bill, who could not raise his voice in his own defence. As might be expected under the circumstances, his vilifiers and detractors accused him of all kinds of things. They said he was a coward, that he had fought unfairly, that he had taken advantage of his opponent's exhaustion to make a furious onslaught upon him. As a matter of fact, however, the evidence of the less biassed, less prejudiced, and more fairly disposed spectators of the fight refuted all these accusations, and it was declared that Bill had beaten by reason of his better staying powers, his superior strength, and his greater coolness.

Amongst the respectable classes of society throughout the land the indignation was very strong, and such brutal exhibitions were denounced in no measured terms.

The coroner's inquest, which was held in Nottingham, led to a renewal of the excitement, and the large number of people implicated in the charge gave the affair an importance that otherwise it might have lacked. The evidence that was given was of the most conflicting nature, but the inquiry ended in the only

way it could end; while "Bill the Bruiser," otherwise William Orme, was called upon to answer a charge of wilful murder, his backers, and all the others who had been arrested, were answerable for manslaughter. Such was the coroner's verdict, and though all the others were admitted to bail, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Bill, and it was placed in my hands for execution. A rumour was current at this time that Bill had escaped from the country, and had succeeded in reaching a place of safety where he could not be touched by British law. This rumour, which had only been vaguely hinted at, grew into a definite statement, which found its way into the sporting prints when it became known that I was entrusted with the duty of hunting Bill down. I did not attach much importance to these statements, for I was too old a bird to be caught with chaff, and I had no doubt in my own mind that attempts were being made to throw me off the scent, though, let me say here frankly, that there was really no scent at this time. Incredible as it may seem, Bill and his friends had succeeded in getting away from the scene of action without leaving the slightest trace behind. This was certainly strange; but it must be remembered that the fight had been conducted with great secrecy, and, at the outside, not more than five hundred people witnessed it. When Bill fled it was nearly dark, and a cold mist enwrapped the earth, and considerably favoured him in his flight, and whether he had gone north or south, east or west, was not apparent. But though this was the case, I did not anticipate any great difficulty in executing the warrant. As subsequent events will show, however, I was a little out in my calculation here; and the taking of "Bill the Bruiser" was to prove one of the most extraordinarily

dramatic affairs that any one could possibly have dreamed of.

When Bill and his friends left the field of action the night was closing in, and the fog had thickened to such an extent that it was difficult to distinguish anything many yards away. Of course all this was in favour of Bill, and he and his "pals" seemed to have made the most of their advantages. I succeeded in ascertaining that they—half-a-dozen of them altogether—struck across the country as the crow flies. I found this out by tracing their footsteps through the muddy fields, and by the gaps they made in the hedges and fences in getting through. At last they struck the high road, and gained a little out-of-the-world village, where they refreshed themselves at the inn, and after a rest of two or three hours left. It was then pitch dark, and raining heavily, and the question I had to determine was the route they had taken from there. Two-and-a half miles away was a station on the Great Northern line, and about four miles off was a Midland Railway station. In dwelling upon this I inclined to the opinion that they would go to the Great Northern on account of the shorter distance, for they would be fagged and weary, and, moreover, anxious to place as much ground as possible between themselves and the scene of the encounter. Moreover, I found, by reference to the time-table, that having regard to the hour at which they left the inn they would get a train sooner on the Great Northern either for the north or the south than they would on the Midland. And this fact would, I felt convinced in my own mind, weigh with them. On pursuing my inquiries, however, I could not at first get any information that tended to confirm my views. But on looking at the time that they would be likely

to arrive at the village I ascertained that the last passenger train that night would have been gone nearly three-quarters of an hour before they arrived.

Under these circumstances, what would they be likely to do? I asked myself. Remain there all night or go on? It seemed in the highest degree probable, having regard to their eagerness to get away, that they would push on. But how? Not on foot probably, as the only point at which they could catch a train was a large town, distant some nine miles or so. That nine miles to men in their condition would be too much, therefore they would ride.

In the village were two inns. One had a livery stable, the other had not; so I went to the one with the livery stable and interviewed the landlord, and sure enough I was informed that the party, finding they had missed the last train for the night, hired a conveyance, and were driven to the town mentioned, where they were dropped at an hotel near the station. They waited there an hour, then departed, but as the train that left at that time was a south-bound train they must have gone by it. It was a fast train, only stopping once between there and London. This was disappointing to me, as it seemed to argue that they had gone to London, and if so it was probable that the rumours about Bill having found refuge on the Continent were true. But I was not disheartened, nor inclined to give up the quest in despair; so to London I went also, and, failing to get on the scent, I got myself up in a very horsey garb, and repaired one evening to the well-known public-house called the "Hare and Hounds," in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane.

This house was kept by a retired pugilist named John Armstrong. He was then far advanced in years,

but in his time he had been a noted boxer, and had stood before some of the most celebrated pugilists of the day. His place was the rendezvous and resort of the "fancy" from all parts of the Metropolis. The class of men who frequented the place were for the most part of a low type. There were hangers-on, loafers, racing men, pugilists, dog-racers, and a nondescript lot who lived goodness knows how, and were ready for any adventure—from picking a pocket to nobbling a horse. Out of this *Olla Podrida* of rascaldom John Armstrong made a good living, and amongst them a good deal of information of what was going on in the so-called "world of sport" was to be picked up, and I deemed it the very likeliest place to get on the scent of the man I was looking for.

At the back of the house Jack had a large tap-room, where his patrons congregated to smoke villainous tobacco, consume bad drink, and exchange views on their favourite subjects. Into this room I entered one night about ten o'clock, the hour at which the place was most crowded. It was a long room with white-washed walls, adorned with vulgar and common engravings or paintings of pugilistic encounters, horse races, coursing matches, and the like. The floor was sanded, and up each side of the room were rows of common forms and tables, while on a rough platform at one end sparring matches occasionally took place, much to the delight of the patrons of the establishment. When I entered, the atmosphere was so befogged with the fumes of tobacco that until my eyes got accustomed to it I could scarcely distinguish anybody; while the din and confusion of many voices, pitched in all keys, were bewildering and deafening. I had difficulty in finding a seat, but at last I did so by the side of a little

man, who had a cadaverous face, hair cropped in New Bailey style, very watery eyes, and a general expression of low cunning. He wore tight trousers, a small cut-away jacket, and a long red waistcoat, adorned with blue glass buttons. I soon scraped acquaintance with him, and learnt that he was a stableman, and had been in several of the stables of some of the great trainers, but was at that time out of employment, and had been out for three or four months.

When I had got used to the smoke and glanced round the room, I was struck by the fact that out of the many present there was not a single face that, according to my view, had honesty stamped on it. Every man there was a thoroughly worldly rascal, who would not have hesitated to cheat his own mother if he could have derived any advantage by so doing.

My neighbour was a talkative fellow, though the only subjects upon which he could converse were horses, the ring, dog fights, or dog races. A pint of "four half" which I stood for him made him communicative, and he enlightened me as to who was who in the room; and pointed with a feeling of pride to a big, bullet-headed, small-eyed, low-browed fellow, who sat at the centre of the table and was surrounded by an admiring crowd, as the "celebrated pugilist, Micky M'Carthy," known far and wide as the "Irish Boy." As the "Boy" was evidently a lion, I resolved to make his acquaintance, for it struck me that he might be able to afford me some information. Not wittingly, for I did not think for a moment that he was likely to say anything if he could help it that would be of assistance to the representatives of the law. My chance to get in conversation with him did not occur for some time. Then, finding that my new-made acquaintance, who had imbibed sundry

pints of beer at my expense, knew him well, I expressed a strong desire for an introduction; and the little fellow in the wonderful red waistcoat and blue buttons undertook to do the needful. So we both rose and edged our way to the champion bruiser, and the little man exclaimed—"How goes it with you, Mickey?"

"Oh, foine," answered the "Boy," with a grin that contorted his mouth into the shape of a horse collar. He was a huge fellow, with tremendous wrists and hands, and seemed capable of felling an ox. I thought that my introducer seemed a bit awed in the presence of the Irishman, but he blurted out—

"Mickey, here's a cove as wants to shake your hand; and he's going to stand some beer and bacca."

On this, the "Boy" stretched forth his great paw, and grasped mine in the grip of a vice; and though in those days I was by no means a chicken, I could not help wincing as the bones of my fingers fairly cracked.

"Sit down, chum," he said, as he dragged me on to the form beside him; "always glad to know one of the right sort. Here, Jimmy!"—this to a waiter who was taking orders—"this gent wants yez."

The "gent" referred to was, of course, myself; and as I understood the delicate hint perfectly well, I inquired of Mickey what he would refresh himself with, and he roared out—"Oh, Jimmy knows my weakness. I never takes anything but Irish."

Irish was accordingly ordered, with sundry pots of beer for the "Boy's" admirers, and when pipes had been refilled we fell to conversation. I found that Mickey was pretty well primed as it was, and inclined to be talkative; and after a time I managed adroitly to refer to the late fight between the "Nottingham Lamb" and "Billy the Bruiser." Whereupon Mickey soon made

it manifest that he bore no great love for the deceased "Lamb," and was all unmindful of the proverb which counsels us not to speak ill of the dead; for in language that was particularly peppery and strong he reviled the deceased pugilist, and spoke of him as a "fellow who never done a square mill in his life." By this I understood him to mean that the "Nottingham Lamb" had never fought a fair fight.

As I was not desirous of entering on a discussion on the subject, I avoided it, and remarked after a pause—

"Well, I suppose they are not likely to take Billy?"

"I'm not so sure of that," answered Mickey.

"But he isn't in this country?" I remarked, queryingly.

"Ain't he," exclaimed Mike, looking at me with a look of contempt, as though he thought I was a fool for thinking as so many other people thought.

Gauging my man to a nicety, I replied with an air of innocence—

"Well, of course, I don't know, but everybody says he is not."

"Everybody!" sneered Mike, with the very acme of scorn depicted on his coarse features. "Who is everybody?" Then in a sort of confidential manner he added—"Look here, cully, any fool can gull the British public. They are about as soft-headed a lot as you can get anywhere."

"Then you mean to say," I remarked, in an undertone, "that Billy hasn't left the country?"

"I don't mean to say anything one way or t'other," answered Mike, as he took a deep swig at his drink. "A wink's as good as a nod to a blind horse," he added, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"So it is," I muttered, "and I'm not so thick-headed that I can't see through a millstone as well as most men. The fact is, I suppose Bill is in hiding somewhere not far off."

Mike took another drink, and then leaned a little towards me, as though he was going to give expression to some sapient remark.

He was evidently a fellow who liked to patronize those whom he came in contact with, and it was evident that he considered himself a person of considerable importance. But he was illiterate, wooden, and stupid, though, of course, he did not think so; yet I felt confident that if allowed to follow the bent of his own mind he would ultimately give himself away.

"Look here, covey," he said, "are you a pal o' Bill's?"

"No, mate; I never saw him."

"What's your interest in him, then?"

"Well, I suppose, like most other people, I'm kind of curious."

"Then it strikes me, old man, your curiosity won't be satisfied."

I laughed at this, and said—

"I suppose it won't. But look here, mate, I tell you one thing that astonishes me, and that is the way the police have been bamboozled."

"The police!" cried Mike, with an expression of intense disgust, and spitting on the floor as if the very utterance of the word had brought a nasty flavour into his mouth—"The police," he repeated, "why, I tell you, there ain't no more pot-headed duffers living than the police. They knows nothing. They can't see things what's under their very eyes."

"Some of them can't," I put in, with a laugh.

"Some of 'em. I tell you none of 'em can. They can only see legs of mutton and other things of that kind what the slaveys hands to 'em from the areas when the masters and mistresses ain't a-looking. No, pal, take my tip, the police is stupid as owls in the day time, and run their heads against 'em as they're looking for without a-knowing of it. Why, blame me, if they hadn't been so wooden they'd 'a know'd as Bill wasn't likely to leave his gal behind; and as his gal's still in Sunderland you may bet your marrow bones that Bill ain't a thousand miles off."

The fellow in imparting this little scrap of information had given himself away, as I anticipated he would, and he proved that he was far more wooden-headed than the police against whom he railed. As I did not deem it advisable to pursue that particular subject further I talked about something else; and thoroughly won Mike's confidence and good will by treating him to several pints of beer "sweetened with rum" as he termed; and which was evidently a beverage that gave him a vast amount of satisfaction.

It was midnight when we arose to go. By that time Mike was "full to the bung" as the saying is, and not only was he hilarious, but he was pugilistically disposed, and he expressed an ardent longing "to chaw up" a dozen or so of policemen. His friends gathered about him and endeavoured to restrain his impetuosity, and, taking advantage of this I slipped away, and as I wended my way homeward I felt that I had struck a trail by means of a little manœuvring which would enable me to run "Billy the Bruiser" down.

By the first train I could get the following morning I was on my way to Sunderland, where in due course I arrived, and proceeded to reconnoitre, with the result

that I learnt that Bill had not been seen since the fight, but that "his gal," as Mike had called her, was living in a little cottage on the edge of a blighted moorland that was entirely undermined, and rendered dangerous to strangers owing to the many unprotected openings to disused coal mines. The "gal" was perhaps twenty-eight or thirty years of age, who was, as I ascertained, to become Bill's wife. She was a big, strapping, coarse sort of a woman, who had lived in the mining district all her life, and came of a family of miners. Her name was Lizzie Saunders. She lived with her mother, a very old woman who had lost two husbands and four fine sons at different periods through mine explosions. I very soon made myself acquainted with the fact that the man I was looking for was not hiding in the cottage, but certain movements on the part of Lizzie led me to conclude that she knew where he was, so I shadowed her very closely, and one evening, a few days after I had arrived, I saw her leave her cottage carrying a large bundle and a lantern.

It was not yet quite dark, but was a bitter evening, with a gloomy, lowering sky, that threatened a downpour, while a freezing wind swept over the moorland, across which "Liz" took her way with the air of one who was thoroughly acquainted with every inch of the ground. It was not an easy matter to follow her; firstly, because if she turned round she would be apt to see me, as the barren moor, which bore a strong resemblance to Macbeth's blasted heath, afforded one not the slightest shelter; and secondly, as I soon discovered, the ground was full of pitfalls and dangerous holes that craved wary walking.

The scene was one strangely weird and repellant in the fast-falling darkness. On one part loomed up,

gaunt and grim, the ruins of an engine-house, the broken wheel, from which depended a length of rusty chain, being sharply cut against the western sky, where still lingered an angry light. This rotting monument of a dead and gone industry that had once flourished there looked exceedingly mournful amidst its blackened and blasted surroundings, while the dangling chain was strongly suggestive of a gibbet. Notwithstanding the difficulties I had to contend against, I managed to keep the woman in sight, but in the increasing darkness this was by no means easy, and as her figure was silhouetted against the gloomy sky she looked like a phantom.

Suddenly she disappeared. In saying "suddenly" I mean suddenly; for one instant her figure filled my vision, the next she had gone as if she had been caught up by a blast of wind and whirled out of sight or the earth had opened and swallowed her. I hurried forward as fast as I could to the spot where I supposed I had last seen her, but not a trace anywhere of her could I find. I strained my eyes in all directions, but it was useless. I listened, but only the fitfully moaning wind broke the stillness. I waited there fully an hour, but without result. The darkness was then intense, the rain falling heavily, and slowly and disappointed I began to pick my way back to town. It was a ticklish bit of business, and I quite believe I should have come to grief if, fortunately, I had not been provided with a box of matches and two or three newspapers which I had stuffed into my pocket. I made paper torches, and was thus enabled to get along; and it was with a sense of relief that I found myself at last on the cobble stones of the mining village, from whence after a walk of three or four miles I gained the town.

The problem that the night had given me set me pondering for some time, and I was at a loss to account for Liz's disappearance; but at last I came to the conclusion that Bill was in hiding somewhere on the moor, and that she had gone to him. To say that he was hiding on the moor, however, was rather vague; for, as a matter of fact, there was no place *on* the moor which would have afforded him the slightest shelter, or that would have enabled him to escape the vigilance of any one searching for him. So I asked myself if it was not exceedingly likely that he had found a hiding-place *beneath* the moor in some of the old workings.

Full of this idea, I fell asleep, and early the next day, which was wet and wretched, I clothed myself in mackintosh and set off to explore the scene of my little adventure the night before, in the hope that I might pick up some sign that would guide me. I should mention that I previously ascertained that Lizzie was at home in her cottage, though I could not find out at what time she had returned.

The daylight, such as it was, did not improve the appearance of the moorland, which was black and blighted with the refuse of the pits, while here and there were deep, dark, Stygian-looking pools of water that had a grim suggestiveness about them. I made my dreary way towards the ruined engine-house, not far from which Liz had disappeared, and then I proceeded to a critical examination of the ground for some distance round about, until, in a hollow, I discovered the opening to a disused working. Some pieces of paper, in which meat and bread had evidently been wrapped, were lying about, and there was an empty bottle that had held beer, a few drops still remaining.

I also noticed many footprints which crossed and recrossed and ran into each other, and though these prints bore the impress of nails, the marks had been made by a woman's boot. Women in the mining districts generally wear nailed boots like men. Across the mouth of the working was an old beam, which, though black and decayed in parts, was trustworthy enough, as I proved by testing it. Then I critically examined the beam, and found unmistakable traces of a rope having been recently thrown across it; and as I sat straddled legs on the beam over the dark hole the fumes of tobacco smoke came up to my nostrils; and as I made my way back to *terra firma* I felt sure I had discovered "Billy the Bruiser's" hiding-place. And the inferences I drew were that he had found a retreat there, and was kept well supplied with necessaries by his sweetheart, who was in the habit of lowering herself down to her lover by means of a rope swung over the beam.

Having learnt so much I withdrew, and hurried back to the town as fast as I could, where I at once secured the services of four constables in plain clothes, and then we proceeded back to the moor, reaching there as the afternoon was on the wane. We had provided ourselves with a couple of lanterns, besides a bull's-eye, some rope and plenty of candles; while in my pocket I had the warrant for Bill's arrest.

When we reached the pit mouth, we found to our surprise that a rope hung over the beam. As there was no rope when I left, it was evident that somebody had gone down, and I at once jumped to the conclusion that Liz must be below; so we lay *perdu* for a little time, and presently, from our place of concealment, we saw the rope agitated, and in the course of a

minute or so Liz came up hand over hand, with all the agility of a young sailor. Then, swinging herself to the bank, with the air of one thoroughly practised in the feat, she landed, drew the rope, unhitched it, and proceeded to hide it in the ruined engine-house, where we had concealed ourselves behind heaps of rubbish. She did not observe us, and, having finished her business, she went away.

I could not help but admire the devotion and courage she thus displayed in her lover's behalf, and I regretted the deplorable circumstances which rendered it necessary for me to destroy her little romance.

When she was well out of sight, I and my comrades held a consultation as to the best thing to be done, and I decided that we must at once descend into the pit. With Lizzie's rope and what we had brought with us we had enough to enable two men to go down at one time. The length of rope Liz had used gave us a good idea of the depth we should have to descend, and which, according to that, was not more than twenty yards This indicated that Bill was concealed in some part of the upper workings, and one of the men with me said that he remembered the pit was flooded years ago, and he believed the lower part of the shaft had been boarded over at the time.

Liz's rope was knotted so as to prevent the hands from slipping; and we adopted the same plan with the other rope. As we considered that three of us were sufficient to tackle Bill, it was arranged that one should remain at the pit mouth as a sentry; that two of us should descend simultaneously, and the third was to follow immediately one of the ropes was clear. Putting our candles in our pockets, and strapping our lanterns, which we had already lighted, around

us, we commenced to descend, I and my comrade going first.

It was a strange sensation as we swung out into the yawning and unknown gulf of inky darkness, and I could not avoid an increased feeling of admiration for Liz, who braved the dangers for the sake of the man she loved. Slowly we descended until we came to a cavernous-like opening in the side of the shaft, while below us was water that looked as black as ink. Swinging ourselves to the opening, we landed, and, casting the light of our lanterns ahead, we observed a sort of gallery running into the bowels of the earth. Following this we came to a point where the galleries branched off in two different ways. By this time the third man had descended, and we left him at the junction, and I and the other proceeded up the right gallery, but had not gone very far when a cry alarmed us, and rushing back we found the third man in the grasp of Bill, who had evidently been on the alert, and was making desperate efforts to get past the man, in order, no doubt, to reach the ropes and escape, and leave us imprisoned in that dreadful cavern. The man had probably divined this, and he was struggling frantically to restrain the giant bruiser from carrying out his plan, which Bill would have succeeded in doing in a very short time, for he had almost knocked the senses out of his opponent. We at once tackled him, and as we did so the third man slipped unconscious to the ground, the result of a terrible blow on the forehead.

Then ensued a struggle of the most determined character. The burly ruffian seemed to be endowed with the strength of a lion, and he fought like a lion at bay, and the united strength of myself and mate seemed to be incapable of doing more than restraining him

from pulverizing us. I tried with might and main to get the handcuffs on him, and did manage to secure one wrist, but with one tremendous wrench he broke from us, made a mad rush for the dangling rope, but in his excitement missed it, or lost his hold in some way, and plunged down into the black water with a blood-curling splash. We waited breathlessly, expecting him to rise, and ready to grasp him if he did so. But two, three, five, ten minutes passed, and then it became only too evident that "Billy the Bruiser" had plunged into eternity. It was a dreadful, a harrowing *dénouement* to the strange drama, but from the character of the man it was to be expected. So other people said. This argued, however, that Bill had committed suicide. As a matter of fact, he had done nothing of the kind; for I was an eye-witness to the whole affair, and I am convinced in my own mind that his intention was to escape; but being excited he lost his hold, and so met his death in the dark pit, which was as foul and noisome as the pit of Acheron.

When a full half hour had elapsed, and there was no longer the shadow of a doubt that Bill was dead, we returned to the upper earth, having restored our comrade to consciousness. He was much mauled and battered, and it was with difficulty we succeeded in getting him to the surface.

For several days attempts were made to recover Bill's body, but it was only on the eighth day that it was grappled and brought to the surface, bloated and swollen out of all semblance to the fellow we had encountered in the Cimmerian gloom of the pit. It is perhaps needless to say that amongst the rough, uncultivated population of the district for many miles around Bill had many sympathizers, and his funeral

was made the occasion for a public demonstration. The miners and their women turned out in their thousands. But there was one woman who did not come. That was Liz. When she heard of her lover's fate she gave one great cry of agony, and her reason fled.

MUCKLE JOCK, THE GLASGOW STAR-GAZER.

FROM amongst the many strange characters I have had to deal with in the course of a long and varied career I doubt if I could select a more remarkable one than John Cameron, who for long years was familiarly known as "Muckle Jock o' the Gallowgate." This illiterate, uneducated rascal exemplified in a very startling way the dictum of the cynical "Sage of Chelsea," that in Great Britain there are thirty millions of people, mostly fools. Jock belonged to the rogues. His intelligence, such as it was, was used to extract the money from the pockets of the fools; and he managed not only to make a fat living, but actually to accumulate property, in the shape of houses, and stocks, and shares.

Jock was locally referred to as the "Stargazer," and he was looked upon by many people as an actual wizard, in possession of supernatural powers. The house he inhabited belonged to him. It was an old and dilapidated place, but in the top flat he had fitted up two or three rooms, and he called them his studio. In one of the rooms he had a large telescope, with which he professed to study the stars; but it may be doubted if he knew Jupiter from the Great Bear, or Uranus from the Pole Star. That was of little moment, however; his victims believed that his knowledge was profound, and they were apparently satisfied. One of the rooms was his reception room, into which his

victims were ushered before they had the honour of being introduced to the great man's studio, where their futures were foretold by the stars; and for those who were bigger fools than the rest there was the "magical cabinet," where a young man or woman saw his future wife or her future husband. This precious cabinet was hung with black velvet, and was kept perfectly dark. At one end was a mirror, and by means of a simple bit of trickery a man or woman's face was made to appear in the mirror, and the poor, simple, deluded noodles, who paid their half-crowns to go into the room—for that was the amount the rascal charged—believed they actually saw their future partner in life. It is perhaps almost needless to say that the majority of the victims were girls and women; nor let it be supposed that all these silly people belonged to the lower classes. It would, I think, astonish the reader if I were to publish the names of some of those who patronized the knave. They occupied positions in life where the uninitiated would hardly expect to find such weakness and superstition; but it is a pitiable fact that such rascals as Muckle Jock can always secure rich patrons to trade upon.

Jock's *modus operandi* of securing these human flies was delightfully simple. It consisted in extensively advertising, and the following is a copy of his advertisement, which for several years appeared in a large number of country papers as well as in those of Glasgow:—

THE Future Infallibly Revealed. Your planets ruled and your fortunes accurately told. Invaluable advice given to those about to set out on a journey, and those about to be married or to enter upon any undertaking. Ladies may see their future husbands; gentlemen their future wives. The science of the heavens has been brought to bear upon these important matters, and the stars are read with an accuracy that is perfectly astounding. Momentous questions can be

answered, and important events foretold. Thousands of testimonials from the aristocracy and people in all ranks of life. Those who cannot apply personally, should write to John Cameron, Esq., Professor of Astrology, Gallowgate, Glasgow.

Incredible as it may seem, it is nevertheless a fact that "John Cameron, Esq., Professor of Astrology," spent upwards of a thousand pounds a year for many years in advertising, and this will afford some indication of the way in which he drew in the money from the gullible simpletons.

In the days to which I am alluding the law did not condescend to take any notice of such impostors as Muckle Jock. Technically he committed an offence, but nobody thought it worth while to prosecute him. Since then the law has been amended, and the so-called and self-styled "astrologers" and "fortune-tellers" can be dealt with very severely, so that the game has to be carried on with great secrecy by those who still defy the law. In Jock's time, however, he and knaves of the same colour could carry on their rascally trade openly, and with comparative impunity. It was said in effect that if those who were deceived did not think it worth their while to take action it was not the place of the law to do so. A different view is now taken, and more protection is accorded to the fools, while the rogues have a harder time of it.

For my own part, I had long looked upon Jock as a public nuisance, and considered that he ought to be prevented from enriching himself at the expense of those who were weak enough to be drawn into his net. But it was not my business to take the matter up without authority. Nevertheless, I kept my eye upon him, and thought that the day might come when I should be able, in the name of the law, to prevent him from fleecing any more victims.

Physically, he certainly was a very striking-looking man. He was powerfully built, with quite a commanding presence. In his youth he must have been good-looking; but when I knew him his face was wrinkled and yellow; he had long white hair hanging about his shoulders, and a long grey beard that descended almost to his waist. Whenever he took his walks abroad he wore a green cloak that reached nearly to his heels, and he carried a ponderous oaken staff, on which were engraved all sorts of hieroglyphics. In the neighbourhood in which he lived the people regarded him with profound respect and positive awe. It was rumoured that he had untold wealth, and that of course begot the respect; while his mysterious manner, his grandiloquent language, and his professed knowledge of "the science of the heavens" accounted for the awe. How he came to be called Muckle Jock I don't know; but possibly the *sobriquet* had been bestowed upon him on account of his supposed great learning.

So far as was ever ascertained, Jock had never been married, and had no family and no relatives. The only people he kept about him were a middle-aged man and woman. The woman attended to his wants, and the man wore a kind of uniform, and bowed the visitors in and out. As they had a pretty comfortable berth of it, it was not likely, of course, that they would ever speak against their master. In fact, they did everything they could to foster the belief in his supernatural powers. In his own way, Jock was an epicure and a gourmand, and the style in which he lived was not the least curious part of his nature. His appetite was, I believe, enormous, and he had a particular weakness for good liquor—a weakness that he gratified to the fullest extent.

One day, when Jock was perhaps at the most flourishing period of his career, a lady living in the West End complained of having been robbed of jewellery of considerable value and a sum of money amounting to nearly twenty pounds. She was a widow lady named Graham, and was possessed of means that enabled her to live in good style in a fine West End house, where she kept several servants. She had two daughters—one fourteen and the other sixteen. They were named respectively Margaret and Jessie. According to the lady's own account, she had been to London on some business, leaving her daughters in charge of the house. On her return they informed her that the preceding day, on going into her bedroom, they found that the cabinet had been broken open, and as they knew that she kept jewellery there they were afraid it must have been that which had tempted the thieves.

Mrs. Graham was inconsolable about her loss, as some of the pieces of jewellery, she said, were old family relics, and she would not willingly have parted with them at any price, and so she at once gave information of the robbery to the police. I was requested to make inquiries, and at once proceeded to the house and interviewed Mrs. Graham. The loss of her property greatly distressed her. She did not care so much for the money, she said, as the jewellery, and she expressed the greatest anxiety to recover it.

Now, it was very clear that as the house had not been broken into, the robbery must have been effected by somebody on the premises, and it was therefore only in accordance with common sense that I should turn my attention to the servants. They consisted of a ladylike woman named Jane Wilson, who fulfilled the duties of

housekeeper, and had been with the family for many years. There were three other female servants, including a maid who attended to the wants of the Misses Graham, and there was a man-servant, who occupied the position of groom, coachman, and gardener. But he did not live in the house. He had rooms over the stable, which was at the top of the garden, and reached from a side street. He was a married man with a wife and two children, who lived with him, and his wife did needlework for the people round about. I saw nothing in connection with this man which was calculated to engender suspicion in any way. He was highly respected by his employer, who gave him a most excellent character.

Of the other servants one was a new-comer. She was a chambermaid, and had only been with the family a few weeks. At first, I thought it worth while to give special attention to this girl, but my inquiries failed to elicit anything calculated to place her in an unfavourable position. Indeed, I may almost say that the same remark applied to all the others. Nevertheless, I felt it incumbent upon me to make a search of their boxes, in the hope that some clue might be brought to light.

This is always a very disagreeable job, and to any one who is perfectly innocent it is painfully irksome and irritating. Mrs. Graham was at first reluctant to give her consent to the search being carried out. But I reminded her that though it was not a pleasant duty it was a very necessary one, in order that no chance should be thrown away of vindicating the law, and recovering the lost property. She thereupon—being convinced by my argument—assembled her household in the kitchen, and with considerable delicacy and tact explained to

them the importance of submitting to the search, for while she did not for a single moment think any of them had been base enough to rob her, she considered that in justice to themselves they should readily consent, and give every facility to the officer entrusted with the duty of trying to discover the guilty person.

Although they readily acquiesced in her proposition, they were all indignant that circumstances should have placed them in such an unpleasant position, for unpleasant it was. However, it had to be done, and I carried the search out thoroughly, but without finding the slightest trace of the missing property.

So far, then, it seemed as if the business would have to be relegated to the category of undiscovered crimes, and there was a certain mystery about it which was very puzzling. Mrs. Graham suggested the idea that some stranger had found his way in from the street, and had broken open the cabinet. I could not, however, support that, for it argued on the part of the stranger a knowledge of the house and a special knowledge of that particular cabinet. Moreover, there were so many things about that the thief might have taken lying ready to his hand that it was difficult to frame a hypothesis that would account for his leaving them and going straight to the cabinet, which must have taken some little time to break open, and his risk of capture during the operation was thereby proportionately increased. The more I pondered on the matter the more it seemed to me that I must search for the thief amongst the household, notwithstanding that so far I had got hold of nothing that would justify suspicion against any one of the servants, and then I began to ask myself whether it was possible that one or both the daughters had had a hand in the theft.

Margaret, the elder, was sixteen years of age, but looked much older. She was a strange sort of girl, and had the appearance of always being preoccupied, and there was a furtive, restless expression in her eyes which was not calculated to give one the idea that she was a perfectly truthful and straightforward girl. In fact, from a study of her face I came to the conclusion that she was very artful and deceptive. Jessie, her sister, who was only fourteen, was a pretty girl, but in a lesser degree she had the expression of the eyes peculiar to Margaret.

From carefully instituted inquiries I could not learn that they had been spending money in any extravagant way of late. From their mother I ascertained that she allowed them as a regular thing five shillings a week each as pocket money, and whenever they wanted more for any special purpose they got it. In spite of my failure to get anything against them that was calculated to foster suspicion, I could not avoid suspecting them. It was a sort of instinct with me, and I could not change it. It will be understood that I had considered the matter from every possible point of view, and had exhausted all the ordinary channels where the seeker after information such as I desired could go, unless he went out of his way altogether. Now, no doubt it seems like going very much out of one's way to suspect the daughters of the lady who had been robbed, but for the hundredth time I give expression to the dictum that it is very frequently the seemingly impossible which proves the most possible. No detective worthy the name will allow himself to be deceived by outward appearances, and in this instance I resolved to take means to prove my suspicions, right or wrong. Of course, there were certain difficulties in doing this, for I

was particularly anxious to avoid wounding the poor mother's feelings, and I had seen enough of her to feel assured that she would be terribly distressed if a word of suspicion was breathed against her children. Consequently, it was necessary for me to proceed with the greatest caution. Under the circumstances a confederate was necessary, so I made a confidante of the maid, having come to the conclusion that she could be trusted. She was a young woman of about five-and-twenty, and her name was Harriet Meldrum. After having talked the matter over with her, she consented to aid my scheme, and one afternoon when mother and daughters were out, Meldrum accompanied me to the young ladies' room, and I proceeded to search the apartment in the hope of finding something that would warrant the course I was taking. But I was by no means encouraged, and was about to leave the room when I noticed a large, old-fashioned, mahogany box writing-desk standing on a table in a corner, and I at once casually tried the lid, but found it locked. Whereupon I asked Miss Meldrum if she had any idea where the keys were, and she said that the desk belonged to "Miss Margaret," and she had sometimes seen her put the keys in a certain drawer in the dressing-table. In this drawer they were found, and in the course of a few minutes I had the desk open. There were a great many letters, mostly from school companions, and a hasty glance over them assured me that they contained nothing likely in any way to throw light on the affair I was seeking to elucidate, so I put them on one side. Then I proceeded to open a recess in the desk, and the first thing I brought to light was a cutting from a newspaper containing the advertisement of Muckle Jock. Then there was a letter, and this letter revealed as clearly as

daylight that Margaret Graham had answered that advertisement, and the letter I now held in my hand was the rascal's reply. It was such a curiosity in its way that I make no apology for giving it in full. It was as follows :—

"miss,—i have reeceved your letter and am to tell you. yes i understand the stars, and can rule your plannets. i can showe you your footure husband, and tell you if you will be hapy and how many children you will have and lots of other infurmashon of very interesting character. dont hessitate to come to me bekus you will learn all sorts of things of much interest and see the man you are to marry, and all gurls like to do that. i have members of the arristokracy come to me, some in their carridges and they are all very pleased. no one can do what i can do, bekus no one had studded the stars as i have studded them and can tell what their meaning is so i hope you will come and see me and i will rule your plannet and reveel all the footure, and tell you how long you have to live and other things. my business hours is from ten oclock in the foor none to six oclock in the night.—Your obejent servint,

"JOHN CAMERON,
"Professor of Astrology."

Beyond this precious document there was nothing else in the desk that had any interest for me, but I saw in that letter great potentialities, so I took possession of it, and decided on the strength of it to have a private interview with Miss Margaret Graham. I did not succeed in carrying out this plan without some difficulty. Although she was so young, she had an amount of self-assurance that was truly astonishing. I had to

act with some diplomacy, and began by asking her if she could formulate any theory as to how the robbery had been effected. Her answer was flippant and heartless.

"No," she said, "unless some of the servants have done it."

"I don't think they have," I answered, with great point.

"Don't you suspect any of them?" she asked suddenly, with, as it seemed to me, a certain anxiousness in her tone and manner.

"No, I do not," I said emphatically.

"Well, then, who is the guilty person?"

"Ah," said I, "that is the question. I hope to be able to answer it shortly; but at present I have no answer. By the way, Miss Margaret"—I added with studied abruptness—"have you ever visited a certain John Cameron, who calls himself a Professor of Astrology?"

At this unexpected question the colour fled from her face, and she seemed much confused.

"No," she answered, "I have not."

"Never?" I asked, laying great stress on the word.

She got angry now and exclaimed—

"What business is it of yours? I'm not going to be questioned by you in this way." Then she affected to burst into tears, and with an impetuous sweep she left the room. I felt now that I had struck a trail, and I resolved to follow it up. The theory I had worked out was this:—The silly girl had been to Muckle Jock, and that specious villain had bled her to such an extent that she had been induced to rob her mother in order to meet his demands. My next step, therefore,

was to obtain the necessary warrant to search Muckle Jock's premises on suspicion of his being a receiver of stolen goods; and I heartily hoped that I might be able to secure a conviction against him, for he was a public nuisance, and the sooner he was suppressed the better for the fools upon whom he traded. Armed with my warrant, I went to his place in company with a colleague. It happened to be his busiest time of the day, and he had numerous "clients" waiting to consult him. My unlooked-for appearance on the scene utterly dumbfoundered him, and caused considerable confusion amongst his patrons, who were nearly all women; one being an old creature not a day less than sixty.

"You had better leave here at once," I said to them sternly. "This man is a rank impostor, and if you remain here you may get into trouble."

They did not wait to be told twice. They made a regular stampede. Then I proceeded to make a thorough search of Muckle Jock's premises, and in a press that stood in his bedroom I found most of the missing jewellery. He vowed and declared, of course, that he had come honestly by it, and when I told him I should arrest him he became as furious as a mad bull, and threatened me with all sorts of things. It must certainly have been a great blow to him, for he had carried on his rascally trade with impunity so long that he had no doubt come to believe that he was quite safe. In spite of his threats and protestations, I took him to the station, and then I went out to the West End and saw Miss Graham. I told her that I had recovered the jewellery, and in a place where none but she could have left it. At first she became angry, but finding that deception could no longer help her, she fell on her knees, and confessed to me that she had paid several

visits to Muckle Jock's, who had promised to reveal to her some most important secrets, but he required a large sum of money. She knew that her mother had some money in the cabinet, and she resolved to have it. When she had broken open the cabinet she was tempted to take the jewellery as well, and not knowing the value of the jewellery, she had offered it to Jock, and thought she would keep the money for a future occasion. She begged and prayed of me, of course, not to tell her mother, but I did not see how I could avoid doing so. The money she had retained she handed to me, and I lost no time in seeing Mrs. Graham and acquainting her with the turn matters had taken. She was shocked beyond measure, and threatened to send her daughter out of the house. I prevailed upon her, however, to act more wisely than that, and I left her to deal with Margaret in private. Of course, no prosecution was instituted against the silly girl, but the terrible lesson she had received was not likely to be forgotten as long as she lived. The money and the jewellery were all restored to Mrs. Graham, and the evidence I was enabled to gather against Muckle Jock secured his conviction, and he received a sentence of five years' imprisonment. No one will surely say that the rascal did not merit his punishment.

THE QUEEN'S PARK MYSTERY.

THE STORY OF A GLASGOW CRIME.

ONE late autumn afternoon, as it was getting dusk, a workman, by the name of John Reid, was passing through the Queen's Park, when he noticed a man and woman sitting on one of the seats. In an ordinary way this circumstance would not have excited any particular interest on the part of a passer-by; for young couples in the billing and cooing stage have long been in the habit of resorting to the Park, in order that they might have more freedom to pour out their love-sick sentiments. It is true that in this instance it was a wet, dismal afternoon. A fine, drizzly rain had been falling all day, and the half-denuded trees shivered in the pitiless air, and the earth was sodden into a sadness that was the sadness of winter death. There was no colour anywhere. All was a dull, melancholy monotone, as if Nature was mourning for the brightness that had been, but which had faded before the chill blasts of early winter. But still even these atmospheric conditions would not have sufficed to damp the ardour of love's passion in youthful lovers; for does not the madness of love make its victim oblivious to all surroundings? What does the sighing swain care for rain or wind, or cold or snow? Fair Chloë may have some anxious moments when the rain falls, as she thinks of her smart bonnet and pretty frock that she has specially donned in order to seem doubly attractive to her lover; but when his arm enfolds her

waist, and her head rests tenderly on his shoulder, while sigh mingles with sigh, even these things are forgotten, and the rain may then fall and the wind blow, but love heeds them not.

Having regard to these facts, John Reid might have passed on his way, and bestowed no notice on the couple who sat there on the damp seat, had it not been for two things. The woman was young and remarkably pretty. She had very regular features, with soft, brown, gazelle-like eyes and a mass of brown wavy hair. Moreover, she was well, if not handsomely dressed, and there was about her general appearance a suggestiveness that she moved in a good position in society. On the other hand, the man was an unkempt, ill-favoured-looking individual, with very dark hair and complexion, and a weather-beaten, bronzed face, as if he had spent many years at sea and in tropical countries.

He was such a very striking contrast to his companion, so rough, even fierce-looking, while she seemed so gentle and was so comely, that Reid could not help but regard them with the interest of intense curiosity. But there was another thing that struck him as peculiar; the young woman was sobbing, while the man, apparently, was agitated with fierce anger.

These little details necessarily had a passing interest for Reid, who was thereby induced to notice the couple more intently than he otherwise would have done. But, of course, this interest was merely evanescent, and, going on his way, he forgot all about them. If he had had the slightest idea, however, that what he had witnessed was a prelude to a strange and startling little drama, he would have acted very differently.

About an hour later the park-keeper was passing

along the same path. It was then almost dark. The wind had risen, and now blew in fitful gusts, dying away anon to low moaning sobs amongst the dripping trees; while the soft rain with maddening persistency dripped, and dripped, and dripped, as if the heavens were weeping for the sorrows of the earth, and for the waywardness and wickedness of the children of men. As the keeper journeyed on his way, his attention was suddenly arrested by what he took to be a groan. It was so faint, however, that though he was a little startled at first, he came to the conclusion that he was mistaken, and continued his course. The fact is, as he himself explained—and this showed that he was not without a considerable amount of superstition—the night was so weird-like, that there was something uncanny in that groan, and he fancied his senses had been deluded by something unearthly. For even the Queen's Park—surrounded as it is by buildings, and within a stone's throw almost of the railway station—and the railway is a ruthless destroyer of sentiment and superstition—is lonesome enough at times, especially on such a night as that I have described. For the park was deserted, and the lights of the neighbourhood of Crosshill looked faint and spectral-like through the hazy, dripping atmosphere. But in a few minutes the man's common sense got the better of his fears, and he asked himself if what he had heard was not really a groan. If so, did it not indicate human suffering of some kind. That being the case, it was his duty clearly to ascertain from whom the groan proceeded. He therefore turned back, and when he reached the spot where he had heard the groan, he stood and listened, but heard nothing save the saddening sough of the wind and the monotonous patter of the rain. Once more he was going away

thinking that his ears must have deceived him, when he fancied that he detected a faint, a very faint gurgling sound. He had some matches in his pocket—being a smoker—and, as it happened, part of a daily newspaper; and rolling up a long strip of the paper, he struck a match, lit the paper, and, holding it above his head, he glanced around, and the light of the improvised torch revealed this sight to him. Lying on the ground, near a seat, was a woman. She was all huddled up, her hat was off, and her dishevelled hair was soaked with rain. His first impression was that she was some poor creature who had been deadening her senses with drink, and had wandered into the park, knowing not whither she was going, nor what she was going to do, and he stooped down to examine her, when with an exclamation of horror he started up again, for he had seen blood, and a ghastly white face that was like the face of a ghost.

His paper torch was by this time extinguished, and not being a very strong-minded man, nor a man of much resource, he set off as hard as he could towards the Victoria Road gate; for, as it would seem, the groan, the gurgle, the white death-like face, and the sight of the blood, had begotten in his mind an idea that a tragedy had been enacted; and so without waiting to see if he could render the victim any service, he tore off for assistance. On gaining the road he met a policeman, to whom he related his experience, but he was so excited and so incoherent that the guardian of the night was not disposed to attach much importance to what he said, but he became more impressed as the keeper persisted in his statement, so that at last the two set off for the park, and on reaching the spot indicated by the keeper, the policeman threw the light of his lantern

over it, and sure enough revealed a woman huddled up on the ground. A brief examination was sufficient to convince him that she had been the victim of foul play. Blood was oozing from her breast, and also from her head, which appeared to be battered; and, as far as he could judge, she was dead. But by this time the keeper had recovered his presence of mind, and he was able to determine that the body was not cold, and, moreover, that there was a faint rising and falling of the chest, which proved that she breathed. After a brief consultation, therefore, the two men came to the conclusion that the most prudent and humane course to take under the circumstances was to convey the poor creature with all speed to the nearest doctor's house. That happened to be the residence of Dr. Walter Mitchell, in Royal Crescent, and thither, as fast as they were able, they carried the woman. It so happened that the doctor was at home, and he lost not a moment in giving attention to the poor creature.

That she was the victim of foul play there could not be the shadow of a doubt. In her left breast was a large jagged wound, the result of a stab with a somewhat blunt knife, and one side of her head had been so battered that there was an extensive fracture of the skull. She still lived, though, of course, quite unconscious. Dr. Mitchell, recognizing the urgency of the case, and that if she was removed any farther the flickering spark of life might be extinguished entirely, humanely decided that she should be put to bed in his house, after her pockets had been searched by the policeman without anything being found upon her that would lead to her identity. The doctor also sent at once for a colleague, and as it was clearly a case of crime, the policeman, as he was in duty bound to do, at

once proceeded to report the affair to the authorities. As soon as that was done, intimation of the deed was immediately circulated throughout Glasgow. Of course, it will be understood that at this time nothing whatever was known of the circumstance of a man and woman having been seen together in the afternoon by one Reid, and it was not until pretty late the following day when John Reid heard of the crime that he came forward to give such information as he could. He was at once taken to the house of Dr. Mitchell, and allowed to see the injured woman, who was still unconscious, and he had no difficulty in identifying her as the person he had seen sitting with the dark-complexioned man on the previous day.

By this time I had been called upon to go into the matter, and I lost no time in seeing Reid and getting all the information from him that I possibly could. He was an intelligent and observant person, and was enabled to give me an exceedingly good description of the man he had seen sitting on the seat in the park with the young woman. On the face of it, therefore, it seemed that this man must have committed the deed, and it had been done between the time of Reid passing and the park-keeper hearing the groan—that is to say, within an hour.

The injured woman was well nourished and well formed, and her hands were white and soft, showing that she had not done any manual labour. Her clothes, too, were good, and some of her under things were marked "M. L." The wound in her breast, although an ugly one, was not considered dangerous by the doctors, as no vital part had been touched. It had evidently been inflicted with a broad-bladed but blunt-edged knife. The injuries on the head, however, were

of a far more serious character, as the walls of the skull were fractured and concussion of the brain had ensued. The medical men performed an operation, and did all they possibly could to restore the girl to consciousness, but without avail. She never rallied in the slightest degree, never spoke a word, but breathed her last thirty-six hours after being discovered in the park.

So far, then, the whole affair was shrouded in mystery; and the mystery was heightened by the fact that robbery did not seem to have been the motive of the crime, for on her person was found a very good silver watch and a small thin gold chain. She also wore a gold brooch, worth perhaps a couple of pounds. On her finger she had a wedding-ring, a keeper-ring, and another small ring set with a diamond and half-a-dozen pearls; while in her pocket was a leather purse containing a sovereign, a half-sovereign, two half-crowns, and a shilling. If the motive of the murder, therefore, had been robbery, why had these valuables been left? It did not seem probable that the ruffian had been disturbed in his fell purpose, for after John Reid had passed it is doubtful if any one else went through the park, at any rate, not by that path. It was reasonable, therefore, to suppose that robbery had not prompted the deed.

As soon as possible after I received intimation of the crime, I proceeded to the spot where the girl had been found. It was close to the seat upon which she had been seen sitting in company with the elderly man. Notwithstanding the rain that had fallen, there were distinct traces in the soft ground of the girl's boots, and of a man's. The impression of the man's foot was large, and showed the imprint of nails. I managed with great difficulty to get a cast of two of

those imprints, and on examining them very carefully with a glass, I noted that the heads of the nails were round and scored with grooves. This kind of nail is very rarely used in this country, but is common enough on the Continent; and this fact, coupled with the description of the man furnished me by John Reid, led me to infer that the criminal was a foreigner, and probably a seafaring man.

On further searching the mud round about the seat I was furnished with unmistakable evidence that the girl had been stabbed while sitting on the seat, for I got traces of blood on the ground. She had then been dragged some yards to the spot where she was found, and her brutal destroyer had battered in her head with his heavily-shod feet. The nature of the wounds indicated pretty clearly that they were due to kicking; but my search was rewarded by a very definite and remarkable find. I picked from out the mud two artificial teeth; front teeth they were, and they were set in gold. They had not come from the girl's mouth, for her teeth were perfect; and in the absence of anything to justify any other view, I concluded that they must have belonged to the man. During the excitement consequent on the foul deed, they had probably fallen from his mouth, and he had been unable to recover them.

I regarded these false teeth as a very valuable clue, and hoped that they would enable me to track the ruffian down.

Notwithstanding that every inquiry possible was made, we could not identify the girl, and could get no trace of her friends. A large number of people were allowed to see the body, but no one recognized her. At last it became necessary for the parish authorities to

consign her to a nameless grave, and she was laid to rest without a friend or relative being present, although a large crowd of strangers, some attracted by mere curiosity, others by a sentimental sympathy for the unknown dead woman, attended the interment. The hypothesis upon which I now began to work was this:—Firstly, the girl was a stranger to Glasgow, that is to say, she was not a resident in the city; secondly, the murderer was a seafaring man; thirdly, that he was a foreigner; and, fourthly, that he had worn two false teeth in the upper jaw, and in the front of the mouth, My inquiries were directed to learn what ships were in Glasgow at the time of the crime, and also those which had sailed immediately afterwards. On none of those that were in the river and docks on the night of the deed, and which still remained, was the man known; but I was not surprised at this, as it was hardly likely that he would have been on board of a vessel then in port, in view of the hue and cry that had been raised. He would scarcely have been indifferent to the fact that to have stayed would have rendered his chances of escape very remote indeed. I was therefore convinced in my own mind that he had cleared out at once. Amongst the ships that had sailed some had gone forth to deep waters, and were then on the high seas; others were engaged in the coasting trade, and had sailed for British ports. None of the owners or agents could say if such a man as the one I was so anxious to meet was on board any of their ships, and I began to have some fears that he might escape me. Then I made a list of the vessels that had left on the night of the crime. They numbered about half-a-dozen altogether, including the Irish and English boats, but amongst the list was one that left at midnight for

Bordeaux. She was a small steamer belonging to a Bordeaux firm, and traded regularly between the French port and Glasgow. This fact impressed me very much, and the more I pondered upon it—of course, having regard to my hypothesis—the more it seemed to me probable that that steamer had carried the murderer away. The agent of the vessel certainly did not recognize the wanted man as one of the crew; and, as there were no passengers, he did not deem it at all likely that the murderer was on board the vessel.

I, however, was of a different opinion, although I kept it to myself. I thought that the likelihood was very strong indeed that he had secured his retreat by means of that French steamer, and this idea took such a hold upon me that I determined at last to start for Bordeaux, and this I did without mentioning my plan to any one.

On reaching my destination I found the vessel in dock loading a cargo of wine for Glasgow, and, going on board, I interviewed the captain, and obtained from him the following startling bit of information. The morning after his vessel sailed a strange man appeared on deck, having been discovered by some of the crew asleep in a lamp and rope locker. In answer to the captain's questions, he said that he must have been intoxicated when he came on board, as he had no recollection of the circumstance. As he seemed dazed, confused, and peculiar, it was considered probable he was speaking the truth; and, as he tendered the money for his passage, he was allowed to go below to a berth, when he slept nearly the whole of the passage, and immediately the ship reached Bordeaux he went on shore. The captain was particularly struck with the fact that the man wanted two teeth in the front of the

upper jaw, and these being lacking gave him not only a peculiar appearance, but caused him to lisp a little.

There was now no longer a doubt that I was on the track of the murderer, and unless the trail should be irrecoverably lost I felt sure I should hunt him down. I turned my attention first to the dentists of the town, for it occurred to me that it was in the highest degree probable, the murderer being painfully conscious of his deficiency in the way of teeth, and fearing that his deficiency might betray him, would hasten to get it made good. Nor was I wrong. A dentist in a small way of business had supplied a man answering my description with two front teeth. The man was evidently a Frenchman, as he spoke French without the faintest foreign accent. From his style and manner of speech the dentist concluded that he was a sailor. My next course was to work in connection with a French colleague, and in the course of three days we found the suspected man living in a small hotel and restaurant in the seafaring quarter of the town. Of course, he indignantly denied knowing anything of the crime laid to his charge; swore that he had never been in Glasgow in his life, and threatened us with all sorts of pains and penalties if we arrested him. But in spite of threats and protestations, arrested he was, and when we searched his lodgings, we found letters and a pocket-book in which there were entries showing that he had lived in Newcastle-on-Tyne; and leaving the fellow in charge of the Bordeaux police, I journeyed to Newcastle with all speed in order to obtain the necessary evidence for his extradition. By his letters I had ascertained that his name was Jacques Pelittier, and going to the address in Newcastle, I was informed that he lived there for about two years. He allowed it to

be understood that he spent the greater part of his life at sea, but having money he had retired, and having friends in England he preferred living there to his own country. He paid his way regularly, and was looked upon as a highly respectable man; but he was exceedingly reticent, and somewhat eccentric in his habits. He frequently went away without saying where he was going to, or when he would be back, so that his absence on this occasion caused no surprise or suspicion, and as he had left all his things his return was looked for every day.

Amongst these things the chief item of importance, as affording a further clue to the unravelling of the mystery, was a photograph of the dead girl. On the back was pasted a slip of paper, on which was written in a woman's hand—

"From your ever-loving sweetheart, Mabel Lavington."

As her clothes were marked "M. L.," it seemed from this that Mabel Lavington was her name.

Furnished with this information, it was not long before I ascertained that Mabel Lavington was the daughter of a highly respectable tradesman in Rochdale. She had been well brought up, but when about twenty she ran away from home, and for two years her distressed parents had heard nothing from her. I traced her to Sunderland, where, it would seem, she had been nearly the whole of the two years, and had earned her living as an assistant in a fancy shop, where she was very much respected. But, of her own accord, she had left. That was about a fortnight before her death, and three days before she had told her landlady that she was going for a holiday, and didn't quite know how long she might be absent. She did not say where

she was going to, nor what her plans were. After that, all trace of her movements was lost until she was found insensible in the Queen's Park, Glasgow.

Furnished with all these particulars, and armed with the necessary official papers, I returned to Bordeaux, but it was only to learn that two days before my arrival the prisoner had effected his escape, and though the most active search had been kept up he had not been found. I was intensely chagrined at this, but I could do nothing but wait patiently in the hope that we should again get hold of him.

A week passed, and then he was found again. This time, however, it was his corpse. Twenty miles from Bordeaux the rising tide had washed him up on to the sand. How he had been drowned no man could say, but it was strongly probable he had committed suicide. His sin had hounded him to his death. How it came about that he and his victim went to Glasgow, and why he had killed her in the Queen's Park, was destined to ever remain a mystery; but I had some reason to believe that he was jealous of her, and had managed by some means to inveigle her to Glasgow with the determination of taking her life, and so artfully had he planned this, that he selected the very day when he knew the Bordeaux steamer would sail. Strangely enough, he was a native of Bordeaux, but had not visited his native town for some years.

THE STRANGE STORY OF A WILL.

"It is altogether a remarkable case, very remarkable. I know of nothing like it during my professional career, which extends now over fifty years."

Thus spoke Mr. Samuel Taylor, of the firm of Taylor & Watson, the well-known Edinburgh solicitors, as I sat in his private office one morning, having gone there in compliance with a written request he had sent me a few days previously. It will be gathered from his remark about his career that Mr. Taylor was an old man. He had; in fact, exceeded the three-score-and-ten of the Psalmist, and during that time he must certainly have seen a good deal of the seamy side of human nature, and he had been mixed up in many cases, which were veritable romances of real life. Hard and practical as a lawyer's life generally is, he must often reflect—unless he is a mere mechanical block, as many are—that fiction is not in it, with reality, so far as romance is concerned.

The case which Mr. Taylor had described as a "remarkable one" was this:—

For many years he had had a somewhat eccentric client named Stonehurst—Henry Stonehurst—who had originally been in business in Edinburgh as a printer. He had carried on this business for some years, during which he was very friendly with Mr. Taylor, who attended to his legal affairs. Mr. Stonehurst in the end proved unfortunate in his business, and had to compound with his creditors. This failure he attributed to his two sons—John and William—who assisted him

in his business; in fact, he left the control of it almost entirely to them. They were very young men, and, like a good many very young men, lacked wisdom. They seemed, in fact, to have made ducks and drakes of things, and so muddled matters up that all was hopeless confusion when the crash came. Of course, the father was to blame in a large measure for having left them so much to themselves; but it seems he was a very easy-going man, and was infinitely fonder of attending race meetings than to his business. This being so, perhaps there was no very great wonder that John and William showed a disposition to follow in his footsteps. At any rate, when public investigation on behalf of a very large number of creditors became necessary, a state of matters was disclosed which was perfectly astounding, and it was proved beyond doubt that Mr. Stonehurst had been hopelessly insolvent for a long time. The liabilities were unusually large, while the assets were practically nil; and that being so, it was only human that there should be a great deal of angry feeling displayed by the creditors whose confidence had been so misplaced. But it was as nothing compared to the feeling shown by Stonehurst towards his sons. It is scarcely too much to say he was furious with them, and vowed that he would have nothing more to do with them.

Besides his two sons his family consisted of his wife and three daughters, one of them a child of eight years of age. The eldest one was twenty-two, the second eighteen, and they were named respectively Hilda, Bertha, and Blanche. They had lived in good style, kept up a large establishment, and had been looked upon, amongst the circle in which they moved, as people of consequence. The "consequence," of course, being

the result of their supposed affluence. When it was found that the "affluence" was a delusion and a snare, there was a general outcry, and the Mrs. Malaprops, the Mrs. Grundys, and all the tribe of Malaprops and Grundys turned their noses skyward, and expressed astonishment that ever they could have been so misled as to notice "such people." It is of course the way of the world. Nothing succeeds like success, and only let it be thought that you are doing well and have some influence, and lo! how the world fawns on you and flatters you; but go wrong in any way, and then—well, then you will find out how fiendish and damnable human nature is.

Mr. Stonehurst experienced this to a very painful degree, and the sudden change from comfort to poverty and privation preyed upon his mind terribly. It was said that he was not so much concerned about himself as his daughters, to whom he was passionately attached. They, too, felt the change severely, as did the mother, and though they were not as wroth against the boys as their father was, they were, nevertheless, very indignant. Nor was this to be wondered at; for there was no disguising the truth that the young men had displayed an indifference to their sisters and mother, and a selfishness that, happily, is somewhat rare on the part of sons and brothers. Not to dwell upon this particular subject too long, I may at once state that between the father and the sons a breach was made which those who knew the father well predicted would never be healed. Of course, the failure and circumstances in connection with it caused the usual nine days' sensation, and then the unfortunate family were forgotten, save by the creditors and the lawyers. The father, with the assistance of a few relatives who lent him the money, paid a

small dividend, and the sons went out to Canada. It was suggested by the relatives who had befriended him that Mr. Stonehurst should commence business again in a small way, and they offered to help him; but his pride had been too much wounded. He had fallen from a height, and could not reconcile himself to a lowly position. The sneers of those who had feasted at his board cut him to the quick, and he moved with his family to the larger world of London, vowing that some day he would pay every creditor in full, and that those who now snubbed him should be made to fawn upon him once more.

It is somewhat curious that this vow was kept to the letter. In London he became a bookmaker; that is, he associated himself with the turf; and it is greatly to his credit that no word was ever breathed against his probity and honour. He became familiarly known as "Harry" Stonehurst, and his transactions brought him in contact with princes of the Royal blood, with dukes and earls, and various other members of the aristocracy. Nor did he disdain to do business with the lowly coster or the humble chimney-sweep. But by all his clients he was regarded as strictly "square," and he was never known to take the slightest advantage of any one who ventured to trust him with his commission, whether it was for a small or large amount.

An anecdote was told of him that on one occasion the Prince ——— instructed him to put a very considerable sum on a certain horse that was the favourite for the Cæsarwitch, but he advised his Royal Highness not to back that particular horse, but another which he named. The Royal bettor was greatly averse to this, but ultimately yielded to "Harry's" arguments, with the result that he won a very large sum of money, and was

so pleased with his success that he presented Stonehurst with a cheque for three thousand pounds.

That story might or might not have been true. The probabilities are that it was strictly true. At any rate, it is a fact that he continued to do business with his Royal patron for many years. For the particular calling that he had thus taken up Stonehurst showed more than common aptitude, and fortune smiled upon him in a financial sense; but he suffered a great blow in another way. One day his wife and youngest daughter, Blanche—who was the idol of his heart—were driving a spirited pony in a dog-cart. The girl was driving, when the horse suddenly took fright at something, and dashing down a hill at break-neck speed overturned the trap, and the two ladies being violently thrown out were so severely injured that they both died. This preyed upon Stonehurst's mind so much that it was said his hair turned perfectly grey in a few years.

Some time previous to this he had opened an office in his native town of Edinburgh, and took a fine house out at Morningside, where he installed his two daughters Hilda and Bertha. He furnished the house magnificently, and provided them with quite a retinue of servants. By this time he had paid all his former creditors in full with interest, and after the deaths of his wife and daughter Blanche he took up his residence again in Edinburgh, and became famed for his hospitality and his luxurious style of living. As he had predicted, many of those who had snubbed him in the days of his misfortunes were glad enough now to fawn upon him, but the triumph was his, and he had his revenge by snubbing them in return.

In the process of time, the eldest daughter Hilda married a well-known and wealthy Scotch hotel-keeper;

but Bertha, though she had many suitors, declared that she would never marry while her father lived, but would remain with and look after him.

During all these years, although it was understood that his sons had made advances to him with a view to effecting a reconciliation, he had so hardened his heart against them he would neither see them nor admit them to his house. As old age began to creep upon him he contracted a painful disease, and for a long time Bertha nursed him with the greatest solicitude and attention. After his return to Edinburgh he renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Taylor, the solicitor, and a very warm friendship was fostered between them. One day, he sent for Mr. Taylor, and instructed him to draw up a will. At this time he was a confirmed invalid and confined to his bed. The will was duly executed, and by it he left the bulk of his property to Bertha, and the residue to his married daughter Hilda. At this period his oldest son John was living in London, and William was in business in a small way as a printer in Liverpool. Feeling his end approaching, the old man, yielding to the persuasions of his daughter, consented to see his sons, and they were both notified to that effect. Just before they arrived, however, Mr. Stonehurst was seized with a fainting fit, from which he only partially rallied; and though it was understood that a reconciliation took place between the father and the long-estranged sons, it is doubtful if the dying man was fully conscious, and a day or two later he had breathed his last. Now comes the most singular part of the story. When Mr. Taylor went to his safe for the will, after Stonehurst had been consigned to his grave, he was literally dumbfoundered to find that the tenor of the will was totally different to that he had prepared in accordance with the testator's

instructions. The writing was the same, the signature of the witnesses was the same, the document seemed identical in every way, save one, with the exception of a relatively small legacy to Bertha, the entire property was to be divided between the two sons.

It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Taylor was aghast. He could not believe the evidence of his own senses. He himself had prepared the will, and had seen it duly signed by the necessary witnesses. Then he had carried it himself to his office, and locked it securely in his safe, and from that time to the time of the testator's death he had no occasion to disturb it. Yet now, when he drew it forth for the purpose of carrying out its provisions, he found that in substance it was totally different to the one he had drawn up, and instead of the devoted daughter and nurse, Bertha, inheriting all her father's property, she was scarcely remembered, and the sons were to take all.

No wonder that Mr. Taylor considered himself the victim of a delusion, and asked himself whether his own senses had not cheated him.

In his dilemma and bewilderment he sent for me, and told me all the facts of the strange case as I have recited them. I confess that at first I was inclined to be a little incredulous, and half disposed to think that Mr. Taylor was suffering from some peculiar aberration of intellect, but he was so precise in all his details, so circumstantial, and, above all, so positive, that I could only come to one conclusion, and that was that a very audacious and very clever forgery had been committed. Of course, I suggested that to Mr. Taylor, and he replied there could be no doubt about the forgery, but the question was, How had the forgery been committed? He showed me the will, and we subjected it to a most

crucial examination, and the lawyer was bound to admit that the handwriting was the most marvellous imitation imaginable of the late Mr. Stonehurst's writing, while the signatures of the witnesses were also *facsimiles*. As evidence of this, the witnesses were appealed to, and, without being informed of the forgery, they were requested to identify their signatures, and without hesitation asserted most positively that the handwriting was theirs.

"Of course," said Mr. Taylor, "as these witnesses did not read the will when they signed it, and as there is only my unsupported testimony as to its provisions, very considerable difficulty might be experienced in establishing my statement, but I assert most positively and solemnly that what I have told you is the absolute truth. The will I drew up for Mr. Stonehurst left his property to his daughter. That will was never altered, and with my own hand I safely locked it up. Since then it has been stolen and this one substituted. Now, Donovan, the thief and forger must be discovered at all cost, and that speedily. There is, in fact, not a day to be lost." The earnestness with which he spoke carried conviction with it, and I promised to do all that I possibly could to help him to solve the mystery, for mystery it undoubtedly was.

The will, I should mention, had been copied from the original draft by one of the clerks in the usual roundhand peculiar to lawyer's clerks, and after that the draft had been destroyed. The clerk who had made the copy was of opinion that the writing in the forged will was his, but a comparison with some of his other work revealed slight discrepancies and differences which could only be detected by minute examination of the two specimens. Nevertheless they were such as to

carry conviction to my mind that a crime had been committed, and I devoted myself to trying to discover the criminal.

A consideration of all the circumstances forced one to the conclusion that the forgery must have been committed by some one connected with the office, and the some one must necessarily have been instigated to the deed by the brothers Stonehurst, who must have known, of course, that their father had left all his money to Bertha. Who could possibly have supplied them with the information if not a person in the office? The thing seemed evident on the face of it, and, therefore, I acted upon the idea, and directed my investigations to endeavouring to learn who the brother Stonehursts' acquaintances were. I found that John, who was resident in London, had led a very shady career, and though there was no legal black mark against him, he bore anything but an enviable character. He had also been in very low water at times financially, and had been put to great straits. It came to my knowledge, too, that some time before his father's death he had borrowed a considerable sum of money on the understanding that he would benefit largely under his father's will, and that the money was to be returned immediately after the old man's death.

This was a very suspicious circumstance, for, in view of the long estrangement between him and his father, he could not expect to get anything. Therefore he either borrowed the money under false pretences, or had certain schemes in view, which led him to hope that he would be able to redeem his promise. He had been married, but was living apart from his wife. I further learnt that he had kept up an unbroken connection with his brother in Liverpool, and that the two men seemed

greatly attached to each other. This so far did not prove much, even if it proved anything at all, and so I turned my attention to William, who I found had been carrying on a printing business for three or four years, but, from all I could learn, had not been very successful. He was married, and had three children, and, with his family, lived in a small house at Bootle, one of the suburbs of Liverpool.

It will be readily understood that difficulties of no ordinary kind lay in my way so far as obtaining information against the brothers was concerned. Although they were beyond doubt cognizant of the contents of the will, they had made no sign to that effect, knowing that if they showed unseemly haste they would show their hand. So they remained quiet, going on their way as usual, and displaying no elation at the prospect of so soon coming into a fortune. This argued an extreme artfulness, and convinced me that I had to deal with a pair of very cunning rogues. Indeed, I have no hesitation in confessing that at this stage I began to think it highly probable that for a time at least I should be baffled, and the brothers might even take possession of the old man's money before reliable evidence was obtained that would justify action being taken to dispossess them again. For, as the reader will be aware, the will then in possession of Mr. Taylor would have to be acted upon unless he was disposed to contest its validity. Of course that could have been done, but it opened up the prospect of long and formidable litigation, the end of which was anything but certain. No one knew this better than Mr. Taylor himself, and he urged me by letter and telegraph to use every exertion, and leave no stone unturned to find out some condemnatory piece of evidence against the brothers; not that

I wanted any urging of this kind, for I was more than anxious to number it among my successful cases; but the lawyer's concern was extreme. He knew how devoted and loving Bertha had been to her father, and he was dreadfully afraid that she would be cheated out of her inheritance. But, apart from that, Taylor's honour in a sense was at stake, because, unless his statement about the original will was substantiated, his veracity might be called in question.

The affair certainly bristled with difficulties and possibilities, and I recognized them all, therefore I was not a whit less desirous of a successful issue to my task than was Mr. Taylor himself.

So far I had conducted my inquiries with the greatest secrecy and caution, so as not to alarm the brothers; but, as I have already stated, up to this point I had not procured a jot of tangible evidence, though I shadowed William Stonehurst very closely in the hope that a clue of some kind might be forthcoming. It so happened that while I was thus engaged a church bazaar was opened at Bootle in aid of some sort of church work. Of course there was the usual palaver, and the "Right Reverend" Bigwig was brought down to put the mint mark on the affair, and to encourage the young ladies of the stalls to fleece their victims without compunction and without pity. The following day, on reading an account of the opening of this bazaar by the "Right Reverend" Bigwig, I noticed amongst the names of the ladies who had stalls that of Miss Amy Mercier Stonehurst. Now, amongst the combination of names possessed by this young woman was that of Mercier, and that had a peculiar interest, if not a certain significance, for me. It was by no means common, and is French in origin, being a cor-

ruption of Le Mercier. Under ordinary circumstances it would have had no earthly interest for me, but now I remembered that one of Mr. Taylor's clerks was named Mercier, and the coincidence set me pondering. Nearly the whole of that night the subject occupied my thoughts to the exclusion of sleep, and by dwelling upon it so long it came at last to present itself to me as a clue to the mystery, and I resolved to follow it up. Mercier was a family name. It was the surname of Taylor's clerk, and this family name was possessed by one of Stonehurst's daughters. A will had been forged by some one who was well acquainted—obviously so—with Mr. Taylor's business. The forged will was in favour of the brothers Stonehurst, and William Stonehurst had a daughter bearing the name of Mercier. It was a sort of puzzle, the pieces of which I tried to fit together, and I set to work to find out if there was any particular reason for Miss Stonehurst having Mercier prefixed to her surname. Family names are not usually adopted as Christian names without an object. What was the object in this case?

Now, the more I thought upon the subject of the forged will the more it seemed to me probable that Stonehurst's daughters would know nothing about it. It was hardly likely their father would have taken them into his confidence. So the following day I attended the bazaar, and made a purchase at the stall presided over by Miss Stonehurst, who was a very charming young woman indeed. I got into conversation with her, and incidentally asked—

"Do you not bear the name of Mercier, Miss Stonehurst?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, with a pretty little laugh. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, because it's a family name, is it not?"

"Certainly. It was the name of my mamma before she was married."

"Indeed," I exclaimed, but evincing no surprise. "Has she any relatives in Edinburgh?"

"She has a brother there."

Her answer enabled me to complete the puzzle, and I saw it all now. I could not bear to question the poor girl any further, and after a few commonplace remarks walked away, and that night took train to Edinburgh.

Necessarily the theory I worked out was that Mrs. Stonehurst, being the sister of Mercier, who was clerk to Taylor, had been informed by her brother that old Stonehurst's money was to go to his daughter Bertha, and his sons were not to benefit. Then had been formed a family conspiracy, and Mercier, the clerk, had been seduced into committing one of the most serious crimes known to the law, murder excepted; for the forgery of a will is regarded as a very grave offence indeed, and visited by justice with correspondingly severe punishment.

Before making Mr. Taylor acquainted with my discovery, I deemed it prudent and advisable to compare specimens of Mercier's ordinary writing with the writing in the forged will. I subjected them to the most conscientious and critical examination, placing some of the writing under a microscope for this purpose. The result was I detected beyond all doubt a certain similarity in the formation of some of the letters. The original will had not been copied by Mercier, but another clerk, so that the forger had to imitate the clerk's hand as well as that of the witnesses, and he had done this so ably that it was well calculated

to deceive any one who did not examine into the respective writings with great care, and subject them to a crucial analysis.

Having so far convinced myself that I had traced the forger, I informed Mr. Taylor, whose surprise may be imagined, and I suggested the advisability, if practical, of searching Mercier's house for further confirmation in the shape of writing. Mercier, who was about twenty-eight, was a single man, and resided with his mother in the Old Town, and Mr. Taylor had no difficulty in carrying this suggestion out, and the way it was done was as follows. He wrote a note to Mrs. Mercier asking that the bearer—myself—might be allowed to go to her son's rooms to look for some papers of importance he had left behind. He stated that her son had gone to the country on a matter connected with his business, and might be absent a couple of days. This was true, as Taylor had sent him down to Dumfries in connection with some bankrupt proceedings that were being instituted there on behalf of a client.

The ruse answered admirably, and, all unsuspecting, Mrs. Mercier freely admitted me to her son's apartments, where in a desk, which I opened with a skeleton key, I found several letters that had passed between Mercier and the Stonehursts; and more than this, and to my surprise, notwithstanding I knew how stupid criminals generally are as regards details, I discovered the original will. Possibly in preserving this the forger thought he would always have a weapon to use against the Stonehursts, should occasion require, though he forgot how terrible a weapon it might prove against himself. But then, of course, he never contemplated for a moment that the crime would be brought to light. No doubt he considered that he had done the business so cleverly

that detection was next to impossible; but herein, as most criminals do, he displayed his fatuity.

So far, then, the evidence to justify his arrest was completed, and when he returned to Edinburgh it was to find himself the inmate of a jail. To say he was thunderstruck is no exaggeration. The web had been woven so silently and insidiously, and without once arousing his suspicion, that the blow fell upon him like a bolt from the blue, and he seemed to be literally crushed; and, urged by his distracted mother and a favourite sister, he made a clean breast of the whole affair. It appeared that he was in the habit of occasionally visiting his married sister in Liverpool, and he had learnt the nature of Mr. Stonehurst's will when it was being copied in the office. This information he imparted to his sister, and she in turn told her husband, who acquainted his brother with the fact. Subsequently the brothers sounded him as to his willingness to commit the forgery, and they promised him three thousand pounds if the property came to them. He was weak, and fell, and details of the scheme were worked out in the way I have decided. The arrest of the brothers necessarily followed, and the grief and sorrow caused in William's family may be better imagined than described. It was all very terrible, very pitiable, and no one could have felt more grieved for the misfortunes of the poor wife and children than I did. But Nemesis who pursues the doer of evil can take no note of those who, though innocent, may fall with him. It is one of the penalties of wrong, and if men who take to evil ways would pause to reflect what the consequences may be to the loved and dear ones, they would surely turn and flee from the wrath that sooner or later must overtake them if they persist in guilt. But as it ever has been,

and as it ever will be, the greed for gain prompts weak-minded individuals to acquire by dishonesty what they crave for to the utter disregard of those who must suffer with them if their guilt is revealed.

After a sensational trial, which extended over two days, the Stonehursts and Mercier were convicted of the crime, and a very exemplary punishment was meted out to them. Bertha, of course, got her rights, but badly as her brothers had treated her, I have reason to know that she suffered untold anguish when she heard of the penalty they had to pay for their wrong-doing.

THE RED FEATHER.

COMEDY and tragedy are ofttimes strangely woven together; in fact, it may be said that they are frequently interchangeable terms, and when laughter is loudest, tears lie nearest the surface. I am reminded very forcibly of this by the strange incident I am about to relate.

My friend, Captain John Hay, was the skipper of as fine a ship as ever sailed the seas. She was clipper built, full rigged, and capable of doing her seventeen knots with a fair wind. It was in the pre-canal days, when fast clipper ships were in great demand during the tea crop to bring home tea from China. In those times Indian tea had scarcely been dreamed of—well, I believe it had been talked about, and I am not even prepared to deny that experiments were then being carried out in Assam and Ceylon with a view to competing with the China market, but I am sure that the majority of people looked upon the idea as a very visionary one, and sure to result in heart-breaking loss. The results of the present day show how wrong that view was, and it may almost be predicted now, that India, in the process of time, will become the tea garden of the greater part of the civilized world. However, this is somewhat of a digression, and yet it has a bearing on the story.

Captain John Hay's ship, he being the principal owner, was called the *Mabel Bell* after his second daughter, Bell being the maiden name of his wife. *The Mabel Bell* and Mabel Bell were beauties. I mean

that both the ship and the young lady were entitled fully to rank in that category; and when Captain Hay determined at the launching of his vessel to christen her after his daughter, he proved his pride in his ship and his love for Mabel, who without exception was as bonnie a lass as one could have found in a good day's march.

Captain Hay was an Edinburgh man, but his family were settled in Glasgow; and his vessel was a Clyde-built ship, and hailed from Glasgow; and the Captain liked, whenever he could do so, to bring his cargo into that port.

His daughter Mabel, at the time of the story, was just turned nineteen, and was desperately in love with a young fellow by the name of Robert Muirhead, who was studying law in Edinburgh. Robert not only showed great aptitude for the profession he had chosen, but gave promise of distinguishing himself. At any rate, his friends affirmed that he was very clever, and it was generally admitted that he was remarkably steady and persevering. When Mabel first met him she was staying in Edinburgh with some friends, and was invited one night to a party at which Robert was present. They danced together, and struck up an acquaintance that ripened into a passion; and when Mabel returned home she told her father, who was then about to sail on a voyage. But he had time to run over to Edinburgh and have an interview with Muirhead. For some reason or other the Captain was not particularly impressed with the young fellow; but not wishing to stand in the way of his daughter's happiness, if he could help it, he made a stipulation that there was to be no communication between the young couple for a year, during which time he would

be absent on his voyage. If at the end of that period they still felt that they were essential to each other's welfare, and Robert had made satisfactory progress in his profession, then they could court each other with the Captain's sanction. So far so good. It was a reasonable stipulation, perhaps, on the part of a father who was exceedingly anxious to take all the precautions he could to ensure his child's happiness in the future.

But it is one thing to make stipulations, and another for them to be respected. The Captain had not considered the ardour of his daughter's attachment, and while I strongly condemn anything like filial disobedience, it was after all only natural, as things human go, that the young couple should find the stipulation a hard one. Thus it came about that pretty Mabel got her mother's sanction—about three months after the Captain had sailed on his voyage—to visit their friends in Edinburgh again, and the inevitable, of course, happened, she met her lover again, and they no doubt renewed their love pledges and vowed eternal fidelity as lovers have vowed since time began. Anyway, when Mabel got back home, she declared to her mother that her heart would break if she was not allowed to see Robert occasionally. Now, it is very possible—nay, I should say highly probable from what I knew of her—that Mrs. Hay, remembering her own courting days, when the handsome, dashing Captain had to woo her by stealth, as her parents looked upon him with disfavour; and, moreover, being a woman, and having a woman's weakness, she was deeply touched by Mabel's declaration, and not wishing that the poor little heart should break, she made this concession: Robert Muirhead—if he desired to do so—was to be allowed to visit the family at Glasgow occasionally at the week end

and spend from Saturday to Monday morning with them.

So eagerly did the youngsters avail themselves of this privilege, that every other Saturday found Robert at the Hay's house in Glasgow, and those precious meetings were taken advantage of by the lovers to the fullest possible extent. So well did Robert play his part, both as lover and guest, ingratiating himself to such an extent in the affections of Mrs. Hay, that the good easy soul offered never a protest when the young man took to coming every week instead of every other week.

So matters went on for nearly a year, and it can readily be imagined that the young people found their world, their perfect joy in each other, and believed—as lovers always believe—that if anything occurred to separate them, life would no longer be worth living. But at last Captain Hay was nearing the shores of his native country; his ship had been signalled from the mouth of the channel on her way to Liverpool, to which place her cargo of tea, which she had brought from China, had been consigned. Then did Mrs. Hay, her daughter, and Robert Muirhead awaken from their Elysian dreams, and felt that the Captain must either be deceived, or a full confession made that his stipulation had been ignored. The idea of deception was at once put on one side, and it was decided that an early opportunity should be taken after Captain Hay's arrival home to acquaint him with the truth, and trust to him to look upon the dereliction of the bargain he had made with leniency.

As a matter of fact, however, Captain John Hay was a man who had very rigid notions regarding discipline, duty, and a bargain. A generous man and a kindly

man, none more so, he could, nevertheless, become stern and unyielding when it came to a question of disregarding an agreement. Therefore, when he heard what had been going on during his absence, his displeasure displayed itself very strongly. Indeed, it cut him and stung him as few things could, for he idolized Mabel, and could not bear the idea that she had deceived him; he considered that she had deceived him in this matter, and though he could not be really angry with her, there is no question about his being hurt. This feeling was also intensified by the knowledge that came to him, Robert Muirhead had failed to pass some important examination, and had rather got into disgrace. I suppose the fact was, the young fellow had been so fascinated by his charmer that he had been quite unable to concentrate his thoughts on his studies as he ought to have done, and the result was he had been plucked.

Having regard to all the circumstances as seen from the father's point of view, it was really not to be wondered at that he sternly announced his determination not to countenance Robert's attentions to Mabel, and, in fact, he decreed that there must be an absolute end to all further love-making between them. In giving expression to this decree he scarcely calculated upon the consequences. Poor Mabel took it so much to heart that she was threatened with serious and dangerous illness. Nevertheless, Captain Hay thought this would be averted, and in a short time her grief would become less intense, and at last cease. But herein he was mistaken, and getting really alarmed, he resolved for the girl's sake to yield to some extent, and on certain conditions. His yielding went this far—He consented to Robert coming on a visit to the house, and the conditions he imposed were that Mabel was to accom-

pany him on his next voyage, and at the end of that time, if she still felt that she loved Robert, and in the meantime he had passed all his examinations, consent should be given to their marriage. There is little doubt that at this time the Captain really looked upon the whole business as simply infatuation on the part of his daughter, and he considered that a sea voyage of a year's duration would cure her.

It can easily be imagined that the young people met again with a joyfulness passing words. And the conditions perforce were accepted—not gladly, but with resignation.

Captain Hay's ship having discharged her cargo in Liverpool, came round to Glasgow in ballast, where she had been chartered to take out a general cargo to Melbourne, thence proceed to China with horses, where she would arrive in time for the first tea crop, and having loaded tea she was to enter on the famous race—which was then a common thing with the tea clippers, a prize of a thousand pounds being given to the first ship to land her cargo in good condition in a British port. This voyage was calculated to occupy a year, and Mabel was to accompany her father the whole way. As the daughter of a sailor, she had no fear of the sea, and having made several short trips, she was pretty well seasoned; and had it not been for the parting from her lover, she would have looked forward to the coming journey with intense delight, for she was fond of travelling, but the separation was the thorn that galled.

Captain Hay did not make it any secret in his family that his impression was Mabel was simply infatuated, and not really in love with Robert, and that in a few months after the separation she would cease to regard him. As was only to be expected, Mabel became

aware of her father's views. And knowing her own heart better perhaps than he did, she smiled to herself, and felt that neither time nor change of scene could ever change her love. So sure was she of this, and so sure was she that her love was returned with equal strength and ardour, that she told Robert what her father had said. The young man did not treat the matter, however, as lightly as she did. A lover's sensitiveness and susceptibilities are so keen that he has generally a morbid dread of anything coming between him and his adored object; this was particularly the case with Robert, and it would appear that he expressed his fears to Mabel that her father's wishes might be realized, and time and distance would wean her from her heart's first choice. Mabel bantered him about these fears; and, lover-like, tantalized him by saying after all he might be right, and when she returned he might find that her heart had grown cold.

The night before the *Mabel Bell* sailed Captain Hay had a farewell dinner party at his house, and it was Robert Muirhead's privilege to be present. It need scarcely be said that the lovers made the very most of their opportunity. But, as was subsequently revealed, Robert seemed very much depressed, though that was not surprising, having regard to the fact that on the morrow he would be separated from his sweetheart, and that a whole year must elapse ere they could meet again, and during that period she would practically sail round the world, and would have to encounter all the perils of those who have to go down in ships to the great deep. He again and again expressed fears that she might change towards him in the course of the long, weary year of their separation. To us who have grown grey and travelled far along life's highway, a year is a very brief

space of time indeed, and all too rapidly passes; but to the eager child and the ardent lover a year appears as an immeasurable gap, and it is difficult to restrain the burning impatience, even as it is difficult to restrain the hunting horse when it hears the horn on the hunting morn. Therefore, Robert's anxieties were—from the lover's point of view—justifiable. Somewhat banteringly Mabel told him in the course of the evening that when he first caught sight of her at their next meeting if her love for him had cooled, she would wear in her hat a red feather, and if on the contrary her love was as strong as ever, then she would wear a grey feather.

The pleasure of that evening came to an end, and the pain of parting had to be faced, and the farewells and adieus were uttered to an accompaniment of tears and sighs. Early on the morrow two snorting tugs laid hold of the *Mabel Bell*, and towed her down the river. Mrs. Hay and the rest of her family accompanied her husband and daughter as far as Arran, from whence they returned in the tug, and the good ship spread her canvas and went out to the lonely steel blue ocean, and her long voyage had fairly commenced.

On all the circumstances and events of that voyage it is not my purpose to dwell. The ship made a splendid run out to Melbourne, and there shipping her living freight with all speed she pursued her journey to China. Fortune again favoured her, and she scored a capital run, arriving just as the first shipments of tea were coming down the country. The *Mabel Bell* commenced to load immediately at Shanghai, and the Captain made arrangements for the work of loading to continue night and day, so that no time should be lost in starting for home. He had good cause to feel proud of his ship, as well as of his daughter. *Mabel* the ship had behaved

splendidly, and Mabel the girl had proved herself the true daughter of a sea-dog. During all this time her father noted that she never once referred to Robert or mentioned his name, and he came to the conclusion that it was as he anticipated it would be—namely, she was gradually being weaned from her lover.

The last chest of tea having been put on board, preparations were made for sea. The sails had been bent for some days, and now all was got in readiness, and at the dawn of day one fine morning the *Mabel Bell* was towed down the river, accompanied by two other tea-laden ships, and two days ahead of her was the first of the fleet, but Captain Hay fully anticipated being able to overhaul and pass his rival.

Down the China Sea and the Java Sea, through the Straits of Sunda to the Indian Ocean, the good ship sped, but the luck that had hitherto attended her seemed now to desert her, and she fell in with a succession of fearful gales, which so battered her that she had to make her way to the Mauritius to refit

Captain Hay had all his life been a lucky man, but these disasters seemed to be foreshadowing the dark cloud that was to fall upon him and his. It was obviously hopeless now for him to expect to win the race, and he resigned himself to the inevitable with such patience and uncomplaining as an energetic and nervously-impulsive man was capable of. After leaving the Mauritius the vessel again experienced very bad weather, and during a hurricane off the Cape she lost her foretopmast and topgallantmast, and this compelled the Captain to put into the Cape of Good Hope; and it was probably that incident that led to all the trouble that was to follow. For one day, while ashore at the Cape, Mabel saw in the window of the stores in Cape

Town some ostrich feathers dyed red, and as they were very cheap and very pretty she purchased some. According to her own account she had quite forgotten at this time all about the joking promise she had made her lover to the effect that if her love for him had changed during the voyage she would wear a red feather in her hat when they met again. The girl had given utterance to the words lightly, as girls will utter such things when they wish to tease their lovers, and she never intended for a single moment that any serious import should be attached to them.

The *Mabel Bell*, having once more refitted, set out on the continuation of her voyage, and thenceforth things went well. After getting out of the region of the Cape storms fair weather ensued, and the run home was a rapid and agreeable one. As Mabel neared her native land she began apparently to occupy her attention with her wardrobe, and she trimmed a hat with some of the red ostrich feathers she had purchased at the Cape. Towards the termination of the voyage the ship had most favourable winds, and made a most excellent run. The wind holding good she held her way until she was right at the mouth of the river, where two tugs were waiting for her; and, as the Captain was exceedingly anxious to get to his berth without the slightest delay, proceeded up the river at once. It had been the intention of his family and of Robert Muirhead to go out to meet the ship, but owing to her somewhat unexpected arrival, and to the fact that she continued under sail until she had nearly reached Greenock, the intention was frustrated, and so they crowded down to the wharf in eager anxiety for the appearance of the ship, which in due course came in sight. As she neared her moorings, Mabel appeared at the rail looking

sun-browned, and radiant with health and happiness. She was attired in a grey dress and wore a grey felt hat, adorned with a red feather. It was a fatal sign to the eager, yearning lover, though the poor girl had forgotten all about it. But he had not. Through all the many months that had gone since they parted he had thought of her words, and dwelt upon them, until they had come, as it were, to haunt him. And now, as his eyes were strained to get a glimpse of her dear face, he saw the ominous red feather, and at that moment his heart must have seemed to turn to lead. By some bystanders he was observed to reel, and heard to utter a groan. Then he turned away, sighing deeply, and in the confusion prevailing amongst the spectators consequent on the arrival of a ship from a far-distant foreign port, he disappeared, and no one saw where he went to.

As soon as ever it was possible to do so, Mrs. Hay and her family went on board. She wondered what had become of Robert, who had accompanied them down to the wharf, but in the gladsome greeting of the returned wanderers he was temporarily forgotten, except by Mabel, who had seen him on the wharf, and was now surprised to find that he was not now amongst those to greet her.

When the first congratulations on safe arrival were over she ventured to inquire what had become of Robert, and she was told that he had been on the wharf, and they couldn't account for what had prevented his coming on board, but it was expected that he would turn up directly. Then one of Mabel's sisters expressed admiration for the beautiful red ostrich feather she was wearing, and she began to finger it critically, as girls will finger and criticize articles of feminine attire. At

that moment the truth flashed upon Mabel's mind. She remembered what she had told her lover when parting from him, and now, all unwittingly, she had appeared with the fatal sign in her hat. He had seen it, and had gone away broken-hearted.

With a cry of pain and an impetuousness that startled her relatives, the girl tore the feather from her hat and hurled it into the river, and then covering her face with her handkerchief wept bitterly, to the amazement of those who loved her, and who were at a loss to account for this strange conduct, but thought that the excitement of the hour had brought on an attack of hysterics.

When the first outburst of her grief had somewhat subsided, she accompanied her friends home, but there was no sign of any word from Robert. Again she gave way to despair, and her friends guessing now—for she would not tell them—that it was caused by the absence of her lover, began to make inquiries, and to wonder why he had so suddenly disappeared. But that day passed and the next, and still nothing could be heard of him. His friends in Edinburgh were telegraphed to, but they replied that he had not returned home. The effects on Mabel were serious enough to necessitate the calling in of a doctor, who said that she was in a dangerous state of mental excitement, and would have to be watched very closely and kept exceedingly quiet.

When four days had passed, and there were no tidings of Robert Muirhead, my friend Captain Hay became thoroughly alarmed, for poor Mabel had developed brain fever, and her life was threatened, while in her ravings she did nothing but call on Robert, and refused to be comforted. Then the Captain sent

for me, and implored me to find Robert if he was in the land of the living.

I confess that I took a somewhat gloomy view of the matter when I heard all the facts of the case, and the conclusion I was reluctantly forced to was that the unhappy young man had committed suicide, and I quite expected to hear of his body being fished out of the river. I kept these thoughts, however, to myself, but I gave orders for all the places of the river where bodies usually came ashore to be watched, and when several days had passed, we were still without any tidings of the young man, living or dead.

Of course I had an interview with his own people. I found them distracted. His only sister was beside herself with grief. He had told her the story of the red feather, and as the time approached for Mabel's return home, he seemed to alternate between despondency and joy, and once or twice his sister had heard him remark that if Mabel's love for him had ceased life would be insupportable. She did not attach undue importance to that; at any rate, did not imagine it possible that her brother would do anything rash, even though all did not go as he desired. Now, however, she had not a doubt that he had destroyed himself, and her grief was so great that it seemed as if she would never again in this world be consoled.

For my own part, I certainly felt that her fears about the lad's self-destruction were likely to turn out only too true. Everything pointed to that, and being so well acquainted with the Hay family, I shared their grief. A whole fortnight passed, and nothing was brought to light. Poor Mabel Hay was in a perilous condition, and hovered between life and death. As for her devoted father, his heart was riven and

wrenched with grief. During this time I had not relaxed my efforts to get some tidings of the missing man, even though it was in the shape of decisive news of his death. Every day I eagerly scanned the papers to see if there was any intimation of a body answering in description to his had been found, and at last I saw in a Carlisle paper an item of news to the effect that a young man had been found lying in an alley, suffering from the effects, as it was believed, of some powerful narcotic. He had been conveyed to the Infirmary, where he still remained in a state of stupor, from which nothing could arouse him. He was well-dressed, but there was nothing upon him that would lead to his identity.

I no sooner read this than I felt as if this unknown man could be no other than Robert Muirhead, and, without breathing a word to any one, I started off for Carlisle by the very next train. Arrived at the Infirmary, there I soon established the fact that the patient was beyond all doubt Robert. By this time he had been restored to consciousness, but had resolutely declined to give any account of himself. When I was allowed to talk to him, however, I soon changed his mood. I assured him that Mabel loved him with a love passing words, and would die if he went not to her. That he would be received with open arms by her family, and would be allowed to make her his wife as soon as the proper and necessary arrangements could be made.

This intimation had a magical effect upon him, and he speedily began to recover. He told me that he had not the faintest idea why he had gone to Carlisle. He believed that he took a ticket for London, but he could not be sure, for his mind was all confused, and during

those dark, bitter days he had wandered about like a person in a trance. He saw things but dimly, and had only a shadowy recollection of what had taken place. How he had lived, and where he had lived, was a mystery, but through it all one thought seemed to haunt him, and that was that he must destroy himself; and, having got rid of everything likely to lead to his identity, he purchased a bottle of chlorodyne, and drank, as he believed, the whole of it, smashing the bottle to pieces afterwards against a wall. There was no doubt, however, that he could only have taken a relatively small portion of the narcotic, for had he drunk the whole bottle full, he would assuredly have died.

As it was clearly a case of attempted self-destruction, he would have had to submit to the ignominy of appearing before a police magistrate, but I was able to spare him from that, and in three days' time he had so far recovered that he was travelling back to Glasgow with me.

No time was lost in communicating to poor Mabel Hay that her lover was alive and well, and had come to her, and from that moment her illness took a favourable turn.

There is no need to dwell upon what little remains to be told. It was many weeks before Mabel was in a condition to get about, but at last she recovered her health, and the faithful lovers were married. It was a proper ending to the strange romance, and, the tragedy having been averted, the comedy was renewed. The young couple received congratulations on all sides, and the first year of their married life was spent in a voyage to Australia and China in the *Mabel Bell.*

That is years and years ago. They have reached

mid-life now, and are the happy parents of a happy family; while Robert Muirhead is, as most people know, one of the most successful lawyers of the Scottish Bar. It is, perhaps, not altogether singular that both he and his pretty wife during all their married years have never been able to tolerate the colour of red, for it was red that had been so nearly the cause of their undoing.

THE MYSTERY OF BLACKFRIARS WYND.

In the very early dawn of a grim, winter morning a policeman of unusual intelligence was standing near the entrance of Blackfriars Wynd, leading out of the Canongate in Edinburgh. The Canongate, as most people are aware, has been witness to some of the most stirring and pathetic scenes in our startling human story. Comedy, tragedy, farce, melodrama, all have been enacted there by terribly real actors and actresses. Every stone and every brick in the historic thoroughfare, if it were endowed with the faculty of speech, could tell as thrilling a tale of sorrow and gloom, deception and hypocrisy, love and hate, loyalty and treason, religious fanaticism and burning zeal, tyranny and outrage, as ever was poured into human ears. Kings, queens, princes and priests, traitors and murderers, have wended their way through the Canongate. Plots and intrigues, that had for their object the changing of dynasties, have been hatched in the houses. The fanatical Knox there thundered his anathemas on those who thought not as he thought. Laughter and tears have mingled, and men, with fair faces but with hearts as black as the fiends of the nether hell, have planned the taking off of other men. If one could only put on to a canvas a representation of all that the Canongate has seen and heard, what a truly startling and thrilling picture should we gaze upon.

Well, it was in this thoroughfare of so much dramatic action that an unusually intelligent policeman stood in the breaking of a winter morning. Why I speak of

him as "unusually intelligent" will presently be seen. The portion of the Canongate which embraces the entrance to the wynd was comprised within his beat, which, throughout the lonely hours of that murky night, he had faithfully patrolled, keeping vigilant watch and ward for the human birds of prey who do their hunting during the hours of darkness. As the dawn began to assert itself he had drawn near the extreme limit of his beat, where in a short time he would be relieved, and he would be free to seek the rest he had so well earned.

It must be stated that though I speak of the dawn, there was as yet only a suggestion of daylight, for it was not seven of the clock, the Tron having but a minute or two before chimed the three-quarters after six. The policeman stood with his back to the wall on the western side of the entrance to the wynd, and he was so placed between two gas-lamps as to be in the neutral line, so to speak, where the extreme limit of each lamp's rays ended, and he was thus practically in shadow, and could not be seen by any one near either lamp.

Standing with his back to the wall on the western side, he had the wynd on his right, and one of the lamps I have mentioned. This lamp was a few yards removed on the eastern side from the entrance to the wynd. At this early hour—that is early from the winter point of view—the street was as lonely and as quiet as a desert. Well, quiet with one exception. Somewhere in the vicinity the night scavengers were at work shovelling up the street refuse, and the sounds of their shovels and their voices reached the policeman, who, as he stood there, wishing probably that the hour of his relief was at hand, noticed a man come forth from the wynd,

glance up and down as if to assure himself that no one was in sight, and then go under the lamp, where he paused, took a note-book from his pocket, wrote something in it, restored the book to his pocket, glanced up and down again in seemingly a nervous way, apparently hesitating which course to pursue, and finally ending by going off in the direction of Holyrood Palace. Now, then, to justify the statement that the night guardian was unusually intelligent. He thought there was something suspicious about this man. His nervous glances up and down the street, his pausing under the lamp-post to make some entry in his note-book attracted the policeman's attention; while his coming from the wynd—which bore an evil reputation—at that hour of the morning added to the suspicious element, so the policeman took stock of him, as the saying is. He saw that his height was about five feet nine. He was of rather massive build. He wore an Inverness cape, and soft felt hat, which was pressed down over the forehead. Nevertheless, when by the action of glancing up and down he lifted his head his face came sufficiently within the focus of light for the observant watcher to see that he had clean-shaved cheeks, but an ample moustache, which was dark—so much was determinable. He was not a youth, nor was he an old man. His gait and supple movements indicated a man in the prime of life—say about forty; and his profile seen in silhouette was that of a man of character and determination. So much might be ventured on by way of delineation, but no more, for all the details of the features could not be seen. The outline gave a large nose and a heavy, massive jaw.

These various particulars the policeman wrote in his little book after the stranger had been swallowed up by

the darkness, and the fact that he did so write them instead of trusting to his memory proved his claim to be considered more than ordinarily intelligent.

This, then, was the prologue to the drama. Now for the drama itself.

It was about ten o'clock the same morning—a morning that was greasy and slimy. A thick, unctuous haze enwrapped the famed city. The sounds of the military trumpet-calls in the Castle broke upon the ear that was near enough to hear them in a muffled tone, as if heard through the medium of the folds of wet blankets. This is meant to convey to the reader's mind that the atmosphere was of the sodden, wet, spongy order. Everything looked wretched and dismal, and the passers-by had a shivery, pinched-up sort of appearance. The wonted hilarity of the street-urchins even was subdued, and every one seemed to hurry on his way as if he had the cares of state upon his shoulders. It made one indeed long—at any rate it made me long—to flee away in the track of the sun to some land where there was warmth, light, and colour. But that could not be in my case, for there was stern work on hand. An urgent message came to me from the respected chief of the police requesting that I would be good enough to go down to his office without loss of time, and in less than half-an-hour from the receipt of that message, I was closeted with the chief in his private room, and in blunt, official way he informed me that there was reason to believe a crime had been committed in Blackfriars Wynd, and as the affair seemed to be wrapped up in a good deal of mystery, he wished me to investigate it, and see what I could do in the way of elucidating the mystery. So off I went to the house indicated in the wynd and began my work.

It was a house of many tenants. In times past this very house had given shelter to a lord, an earl, and a countess, for it was rich in history, and had been a favourite place of residence with members of the aristocracy. But now, alas! what a falling-off was there. The lords and ladies had long and long ago mouldered into dust, but the house still stood, though it was now a forlorn wreck, yet even in its decay bearing some traces of its former grandeur. The entrance was through a stone portal, on the keystone of which was carved a coat-of-arms, though time and dirt had almost obliterated it. Once through this portal, and you found yourself in a wind-swept passage, sickening with malodours, and gloomy with the grime and dirt of ages. From the passage a wooden stair led to the upper stories, and having mounted this stair, I paused on the third story before a door whereon was a brass-plate with the legend—"Mrs. Janet Gordon." I pulled the bell, and the door was instantly opened by a policeman—not the "unusually intelligent one." I had not come in contact with him yet. This one was P 76, and he was gruff and surly.

"What do you want?" he demanded unceremoniously, and with that gritty coarseness peculiar to many of the Northern men.

"I have business," I responded meekly.

"What is your business?" This even more gruffly.

"Oh, I simply want to know what has taken place."

"Then, if that is all, you can go away, for you won't know," and the somewhat too zealous warder seemed inclined to lay his heavy hand on my shoulder and turn me out; but into his ear I breathed my name,

and then, with a certain deferential inclination of his ponderous red-thatched head, he moved on one side, saying as he did so—

"It seems a queer job, sir, altogether. A case of murder, I should say."

At this point an inner door opened, and a gentleman appeared on the threshold. I at once recognized him as Doctor M'Leod, the police surgeon.

"Ah, sir," he exclaimed as he saw me. "I thought you would be turning up. It is a strange business this. After your own heart, I should think."

This was a somewhat doubtful compliment. But what he meant to convey was that such faculties as I had been endowed with would probably have to be brought into active operation in getting to the bottom of the affair. He was about to take his departure, but turned back into the room, I following. There I found Dr. Claude Scott, one of the senior surgeons of the infirmary, and a very well-known city practitioner; and with him I found Mr. Brown, of the Secret Investigation Department, and a middle-aged, *passée* little woman, who, I was to learn, was Mrs. Janet Gordon, the landlady of the house. Without quoting the precise language used, I may state that Dr. M'Leod gave me the following particulars as he had gathered them. A young woman known as Mrs. Peterson had been a lodger in the house for a period of something like twelve months. She represented herself as the wife of a seaman who was away on a long foreign voyage, but very little indeed was known about her. She was described by the landlady as very quiet and very respectable, and was apparently well supplied with money. At any rate, she paid her way. She did not mix at all with the neighbours, and went out a good deal. The preceding

afternoon, about half-past five o'clock—having been out nearly all day—she returned home and let herself in with the latchkey as usual, and soon after she went to the landlady, seemingly in exceptionally good spirits, and said she had met a dear old friend of hers, a gentleman who also knew her husband, and she was going to give him some tea.

The landlady offered to prepare the tea and take it into the room, but Mrs. Peterson insisted in doing it all herself. Some hours later, that was about ten o'clock, Mrs. Peterson went to the landlady—knowing that there was an unlet bedroom—and inquired if the gentleman could have a bed, as he had missed his train. The price to be paid was determined on, the bed was prepared, and a little while after the landlady heard the strange lodger go to his room and close and lock the door; but it is important to bear in mind that she did not see him, had never caught a glimpse of his face.

She rose about eight or soon after, and being anxious to know if she would prepare any special breakfast for Mrs. Peterson and her friend, she went to the door of the former and knocked, but got no response, so knocked again, but with the same result. Consequently she turned the handle. The door was not locked. She pushed it open, entered the sitting-room, thence the bedroom, which was in darkness, while not a sound broke the stillness. She drew up the blind, then noted that her lodger was in bed, but entirely covered with the clothes. She pulled the clothes down from the head and face, and to her horror she saw that Mrs. Peterson was dead. Acting on a sudden impulse, the outcome of this startling discovery, she rushed to the chamber of the strange lodger, knocked at the door, got no answer.

Turned the handle, the door yielded; she entered, but no lodger was there. The bed had certainly been slept in, but the stranger had gone, leaving no trace behind him. Mrs. Janet Gordon was a common-place person enough —a fair type, in fact, of the class of people to be found in the wynd, and maybe she was neither better nor worse than her neighbours, but she did not lack intelligence; so, locking the doors of both rooms, and without saying a word to any one else in the house, she posted off to the nearest police office and told the strange tale. Investigation followed, and served to corroborate her statement.

The death of Mrs. Peterson and the strange disappearance of the man naturally suggested murder; but at this time the landlady had not noted any external signs on the corpse to indicate that the poor creature had been murdered.

So much for the broad facts. Now for the medical features. The doctors were puzzled to account for death. The deceased looked perfectly placid, and as if she was in a sweet sleep. With the exception of two or three small blue marks on the neck, arising apparently from the pressure of fingers, there was no abrasion or bruise on the body. And the marks on the throat told very little, for it was very obvious she had not died of strangulation. The result was the cause of death could not be determined without a *post-mortem* examination. The dead woman's age I fixed at about thirty-two. She was very passably good-looking. She had fairly sound and white teeth, good hair of a reddish brown shade, dark brown eyes, very well defined eyebrows, and a prettily-shaped mouth. There was not a fault, in a general way, to be found with her figure, though she had rather large feet, and her hands were

also large, but showed no trace of manual labour. Altogether, the conclusion I came to was that in life she must have been a very attractive woman, and the landlady bore this out, adding that—

"The poor thing was just as nice a body as ever I met. She was so quiet and gentle, and wouldn't have hurt a fly. I cannot understand why any one should have wanted to kill her."

Of course, Mrs. Janet Gordon couldn't understand that, for she knew little of the inner and subtle workings of human nature. She saw things from the surface point of view only, and never concerned herself with what might be in the depth.

I have mentioned that on the throat there were certain marks as if caused by thumb and finger pressure, but they were slight, and were not such as they would have been, had the victim been strangled with the hands of her destroyers. As a matter of fact, all the indications of strangulation were entirely wanting, and the theory of the marks that suggested itself to me was this. While the woman was unconscious or semi-unconscious, the murderer had placed his hand on her throat with a view possibly of stopping her from uttering groans. I use the definite term "murderer" even at this early stage; for, though the medical men were quite puzzled as to the precise cause of death, I could not avoid the conclusion that the woman had been wilfully killed. Therefore, it was murder in the first degree; and if I am asked for my reasons why I thought so, I should answer that, to my mind, quickened as my perceptions were by long years of dealing with the wicked side of human nature, the *minutiæ* of this case, as I there and then gathered them, were strongly presumptive of a dark and dreadful crime. The reader

will, no doubt, be able to follow me in this line of argument, and he will see that the whole affair was one of mystery from beginning to end. A woman of whose past history nothing was known had lodged there for twelve months. A man, "an old friend," as she described him, entered the house with her on a certain night, and he occupied a bedroom which was placed at his disposal by the landlady. In the morning he has disappeared, and the woman is found dead. Now, let it be borne in mind that the landlady had never looked upon this man, and at this stage not the smallest particle of description of him was forthcoming.

Two very important questions, therefore, had to be determined. Firstly, how had the woman been killed? Secondly, why had she been killed?

The first might be answered with comparative ease; for though the doctors saw nothing then to really account for the sudden going out of the lamp of life, they could search the interior of the body for the evidence they wanted. The second question, however, might prove very much more difficult to answer, and there was even the possibility that it would never be answered at all. In the one case, science had tangible physical evidence to work upon. In the other, one could only theorize and speculate, and endeavour to draw deductions—more or less accurate—from a given set of premises.

I found that Dr. M'Leod inclined strongly to the belief that the woman had had a weak heart, and some sudden fright had brought on syncope. His theory was this. The man had perhaps been in the act of gathering up such valuables as she might have had in her room, when being aroused from sleep, and realizing what he was doing, she was about to cry out, when he

rushed at her, and placed his hands on her throat, and the fright he thus caused her produced sudden death—much to his own surprise and horror. It was an ingenious theory I must confess, but it would not bear analysing from my point of view. There was a motive far deeper than that underlying the crime, and in support of this such jewellery as the woman had possessed was still there intact, according to the landlady, and on the dressing-table was a well-worn purse, containing nearly three pounds in money. Consequently, if mere robbery had been the motive, why did the fellow depart without carrying the jewellery and the money away?

However, there was much to be done and much to be determined before the mystery could be cleared away. What we had to deal with then was, a woman had died in an unaccountable manner. A *post-mortem* would furnish the evidence as to how she had died. Further, a man was known to have been in the house the preceding night. That man she had spoken of as an old friend, but he was now *non est;* to tell why he had disappeared, and where he had disappeared to, might prove a problem of infinitely more difficult solution than how her death had been brought about.

As nothing more could be done at that early stage the doctors took their departure, the policeman was left in charge, and I lost no time in prosecuting such inquiries as might have a tendency to give a clue to the whereabouts of the missing stranger, but at this time I had no description whatever of him, and now the "unusually intelligent policeman" appeared upon the scene. As soon as he heard of the crime he lost not a moment in looking me up, and he furnished me with the particulars he had jotted down in his book. Those

particulars settled definitely that when the strange man issued from the wynd, and paused under the lamp-post to make some memorandum, the hour was not yet seven. It was not much more than an hour after that Mrs. Janet Gordon made the discovery that her lodger was dead and the mysterious stranger had gone. Before ten a doctor had seen the body, and he unhesitatingly declared that Mrs. Peterson must have been dead from six to eight hours. If that was correct, she must have died several hours before the policeman saw the stranger come from the wynd. If, therefore, the stranger was the man she had spoken of as her old friend, he had remained in the house a considerable time after she had passed away, and that argued a coolness and self-possession which were remarkable.

Although I made the most careful inquiries amongst the inhabitants of the wynd, I could not hear of any one who answered the description of the stranger seen coming from the wynd before seven o'clock on that fateful morning. Therefore, it was justifiable to come to the conclusion that the man in the Inverness cape and soft felt hat, who paused under the lamp to jot down something in his note-book, had just left Mrs. Janet Gordon's house, and that being admitted, then the assumption was that he was in a position to enlighten us as to why the woman had died, and, unless he came forward voluntarily to do so, he would have to be hunted for, and his dark secret wrested from him.

Up to this point the mystery of the case certainly appeared to be almost inscrutable, but it was rendered infinitely more so when in the course of that evening a *post-mortem* examination was made in the presence of several medical men, and they could find nothing to account for death. With the exception of a very slight

congestive appearance of the lungs, every organ in the body was perfectly sound, the heart being unusually strong and free from any signs of disease. The congestion in itself could not possibly have caused death, and it was, according to the medical evidence, of very recent occurrence, and had been set up probably just shortly before the woman's death.

The next question was, Did the poor creature die from the effects of poison? There was no surface evidence of this in any of the organs, so it became imperative that an analysis should be carried out with all possible speed, and the viscera were taken charge of for that purpose, while I set to work to try and find the strange man whom the policeman had seen coming from the wynd, and who, I now feel perfectly confident, was in a position to throw light where all was dark. The description I had of him was necessarily vague and shadowy, but still it was something, and from such meagre details as I had I photographed him on my brain, and even made a rough sketch of him on a sheet of paper, so that I might have something definite to carry in my mind's eye. And in order to leave no stone unturned likely to aid me in my quest, I proceeded to make a thorough search of the dead woman's effects, for it was important that some knowledge of her history should be gained, as that might prove a thread of great importance, and lead ultimately to a successful issue in our efforts to unravel this strange case.

I did not find much to aid me amongst the woman's things—at least, not at first. She had a quantity of trumpery geegaws in the shape of jewellery, and a few pieces of some value. She had also some fairly good clothing; but her personal wardrobe did not interest me, inasmuch as it was not in the least likely to afford

a clue to the whereabouts of the man who had taken her life. As I pursued my investigations, however, I came upon something of far more interest. In an old leather trunk, very much battered and very much worn from long service and much travel, was one of the old-fashioned rosewood writing-desks, also considerably the worse for wear. The lock was broken, a hinge was missing, the woodwork bore many a dent and dinge. The desk contained a number of pawn-tickets, also a quantity of letters; a lock of fair hair from a child's head, a faded photograph of a remarkably pretty girl about six or seven, probably the girl from whose head the lock of hair had been cut. On the back of the photograph was this inscription :—

"My Darling Little Flora,
Died January 12th, 1861.
Never forgotten."

These few words were eloquent of a mother's love, and the inference I drew was that Mrs. Peterson had been the mother of the fair-haired Flora, who had gone to God before the world's slow stain had left its impress on her. That Mrs. Peterson had a history I now no longer doubted, and I was quite prepared for a revelation. From what I had gathered so far—principally from Mrs. Janet Gordon—I came to the conclusion that Mrs. Peterson was very superior to most of the people who made their home in that noisome wynd. Her landlady spoke of her as being "quite a lady," and well educated. Of the truth of the latter statement evidence was soon forthcoming in the shape of various specimens of her writing, which Mrs. Gordon identified. The writing was exceedingly good; the grammar and general style beyond cavil.

Referring to the pawn-tickets of which I have made

mention, they were, with one exception, all vouchers for jewellery, pledged in the name of Peterson, with various Edinburgh pawnbrokers. Inferentially, therefore, I came to the conclusion that the unfortunate woman had been possessed of a valuable collection of trinkets which she had from time to time pawned in order to support herself; and as she thus got rid of the genuine ones, she replaced them with worthless imitations. The possession of the jewellery pointed to her having been in good circumstances at some period of her life, but for reasons not then definable she had sunk in the social scale, and had gone to the wynd to lose herself, as the saying is, and hide her secrets from prying eyes. Presently confirmation of this was forthcoming in a bundle of letters tied up with a piece of faded blue ribbon, and which I dragged to light from a recess in the desk. I soon gathered that these letters—which were spread over a number of years—had been written by a woman signing herself "Martha Burns," and it was made clear to me by a careful persual of them that Martha Burns had once been nurse to Mrs. Peterson, for whom she manifested the deepest affection. Reference was frequently made to Mrs. Peterson's relatives and parents—but not by name, and the general drift of the correspondence was to try and persuade the receiver to return like a stray sheep to the fold from whence she had wilfully and heedlessly wandered. Some of the early letters had been written from a town in the north of Scotland, later ones from Birmingham, where the writer evidently was in the service of a family; later ones still from Ayr, others again from Glasgow, and finally they bore the address of a Glasgow Infirmary, where, as was made evident, Martha Burns was lying, suffering from some incurable malady. Judging from these

letters, the writer must have been a sincere, earnest, and devout woman, who accepted her lot in life without a murmur, and was disposed to see good where others would only have seen evil.

This, then, was the extent of my discovery so far, and of course, it devolved upon me to seek out Mrs. Burns if she was still in the land of the living. And so eager was I to ascertain if such was the case, that an hour and a half later I was travelling to Glasgow, where on my arrival I jumped into a cab, drove off to the Infirmary, and found, much to my gratification, that Mrs. Burns was still alive, and an inmate of that most excellent institution; but that she was in an exceedingly feeble condition, and the last grains of her sands of life were fast flowing out.

Save for the urgency of my business, I could not have seen her, but in a case of this kind it was most important that no chance should be missed of endeavouring to get on the track of the mysterious man who, presumptively at that stage, was responsible for Mrs. Peterson's death.

Mrs. Burns having been forewarned of my coming, I was taken to her bedside. Her letters had led me to expect to find an amiable, kind-hearted woman, nor was I disappointed. Stricken in years and racked with suffering, she nevertheless preserved an outward calm, and her gentleness of manner was remarkable. It was a delicate task I had to perform, for this old woman, who was trembling on the verge of the unknown, had loved Mrs. Peterson as a mother loves her child. Therefore it would not do to shock her with the sudden news of her loved one's death, lest the flickering lamp of life should there and then be extinguished. Gradually I began to lead up to the subject, but with a quick,

intelligent perception she divined the truth before I could tell it, and said hurriedly—

"Something terrible has happened to poor Emmy. Don't deceive me. Isn't it so?"

I told her that Mrs. Peterson had been called away, and when the poor old creature heard this, she wept and sobbed with an exceeding great bitterness. But after the first paroxysm she restrained her feelings, and, with a deep sigh, remarked—

"Ah, well, a few years sooner or later make little difference, we are all going to the bourne from whence none returns, and those who die young are spared much suffering in this world."

I assented to the philosophy she embodied, and then gradually drew from her the following touching story:—

Mrs. Peterson—which was an assumed name—had been a Miss Emma Sheldrake, the third daughter of an opulent Inverness gentleman who had made a fortune as a contractor. With this family Mrs. Burns took service when she was quite a young woman, that was before Emma's birth. She nursed Emma, and brought her up. She was a wayward, headstrong girl, and repeated the old, old story for the millionth time of misplaced love. She fell in love with the handsome, reprobate son of a neighbour whom the Sheldrakes would not notice, and they gave their daughter to understand that under no possible circumstances would they countenance the youth's professions of regard for her. He was sternly forbidden, indeed, ever to dare by word look, or letter to tempt the girl from the duty she owed her parents.

How often, alas! in human history, has this been done before, with the same results as in this case. Emma Sheldrake, being infatuated, did clandestinely

what she had been strictly forbidden to do openly, and despairing of ever being able to influence her people, she, in an evil moment, fled with the man of her choice, and precisely what had been predicted speedily came to pass. He tired of her, neglected her, abused her, and finally fled from her, leaving her with the responsibility of a young baby, the Flora of the photograph. Her people proved pitiless and relentless. They vowed that never again should she darken their doors, and the vow was cruelly kept. Though on her part Emma was proud and self-reliant, and would make no confession of her sin, nor ask for forgiveness from her sorely offended parents, Mrs. Burns championed her cause, pleaded for her, but it was all useless. She had been cast out, and it was resolved she should remain an outcast, and so as the years rolled on the breach was ever and ever widened, and reconciliation became more and more hopeless; but, though abandoned by all the others, Mrs. Burns kept up a connection with her former charge, and the correspondence had been continued down to a few days of poor Emma's mysterious death.

Such was the story I learnt of Emma Sheldrake's *alias* Peterson's history. Her real married name was Roberts, but she had dropped that years ago, and, wishing to conceal her identity, she assumed that of Peterson.

Although I had thus discovered who the murdered woman was, it did not apparently help me in tracing the murderer. Now, as to the cause of death, which the superficial *post-mortem* examination failed to reveal, an analysis brought to light that she had been killed by a peculiar drug—an alkaloid extract of a Mexican herb—which in the human subject has the remarkable property

of gradually lowering the heart's action, until the heart stops altogether. If administered the last thing at night, the person taking it would be almost sure to die while asleep. Almost absolutely no trace was left in the body a few hours after death, but by analysis the drug could be detected in the fluids.

The means by which Mrs. Peterson had been killed argued some special and peculiar knowledge on the part of the killer, who was not a criminal of the ordinary type. The drug was not sold in a general way—in fact, fifty or more druggists might have been visited before the article could have been procured, and the possession of it by the man who had done Mrs. Peterson to death showed that he knew the strange power of the drug and where to get it.

Now came the question, Why had the murder been committed—that is, what was the motive? Not robbery. This led me to work out several theories, and at last I came to the conclusion that, if the crime was not a perfectly objectless one, jealousy had prompted it. Then arose another question, Jealousy of whom? If I could find out that I might be able to discover the criminal. I have already mentioned, however, that she was very reticent about her affairs, according to the landlady, and investigation confirmed this. She had made no acquaintance in the wynd, and no one there could give any information about her. The result was, I resolved to go to her native place and endeavour to learn something of the associates of her early days. My inquiries elicited the fact that in her youth she had been a great flirt, and had caused many heartaches and bickerings amongst the young men of her neighbourhood. At one time she had favoured the advances of a person named Arthur Goldie, who was in business for himself

as a grocer in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He had been married, but his wife had died a few months later, leaving him childless. How Emma became acquainted with him was not made clear. The most I could learn was that he had expressed a wish to marry her, but as he bore the reputation of being unsteady and unreliable her parents would not consent to the union, and Emma gave him up. There was a belief that he took this disappointment very much to heart, and there was a tradition that he had uttered a vow that if she did not marry him she should not marry any one else. This vow, however, did not take effect, inasmuch as she did marry some one else.

As I dwelt and reflected on all the foregoing particulars, which I had gathered up, I thought, in view of my theory about jealousy having been the motive for the crime, that it was worth while to trace out Arthur Goldie's career, and I visited Newcastle for that purpose. It was not without difficulty that I discovered some of his connections, and then not in Newcastle, but in Stockton-on-Tees. From them I learnt that he had sold his business in Newcastle after his disappointment, and for some time displayed a very restless, wandering spirit, and finally disappeared altogether, severing all connection with his family.

I have mentioned that, from the description given me by the "unusually intelligent policeman" of the man he had seen coming from the wynd, I had made a mental photograph, as it were, and had even produced a drawing of the fellow. So I thought it worth while to see a likeness of Arthur Goldie, if that were possible. In this I succeeded after some trouble, but it had been taken years before, and represented him as a very young man.

It will be gathered from what I have said that in seeking particulars of Arthur Goldie I had an eye to possibilities. If I may speak figuratively, I had turned the matter over, sifted it, and examined it microscopically, with the result that I believed I detected jealousy as the active principle of the crime. If this was so, was it not likely the jealousy was of long standing? Given that that was correct, was it not equally likely that Goldie was the man who had displayed it? This was my line of reasoning, and I was determined to pursue it, and thus it came about that I found myself in possession of Goldie's photograph.

It was the photograph of a young man, rather good-looking. It happened that it was a full-length portrait. Apparently he was standing in an attitude that was calculated to display all his points, if I may be allowed such an expression. He wore a frock-coat, had his hair parted in the middle, his moustache carefully curled, and he seemed to be gazing with rapt admiration on a bunch of paper roses which the photographer had placed on the table. On the first blush nothing could have seemed more dissimilar than the portrait of this young fellow and the descriptive picture of the man who came from the wynd and stood under the lamp-post. But I studied that photo line by line. I examined it through a glass, I looked at it from a distance, I looked at it near, until it began to grow upon me that there were points in common between the two. I really don't know if I could explain in what way there was a resemblance. I was impressed with the idea, and impressions, like sensations, are not easily described. What I tried to do was this. I tried to imagine Goldie wearing an Inverness cape, a soft felt hat, and standing under the lamp-

post with a note-book in his hand; and having drawn such a mental picture as that, I seemed to realize accurately the description given to me by the policeman. Such a hold did this idea take upon me, that I began to work on the assumption that Arthur Goldie was the man I wanted. It was by a very careful weighing of every little detail in connection with the case that I was led to this conclusion; and it seemed to me, that while there were many chances that I was wrong, there were more in favour of my being right. Anyway, there is nothing like having the courage of one's opinions, and I have always had that; but I have ever striven to base my opinion on sound reasoning.

Although I assumed that Arthur Goldie was possibly the man wanted, I did not expect to find him in Edinburgh, nor indeed in Scotland. My deduction was that the man who committed the deed had come from abroad. It will be remembered that Mrs. Peterson told her landlady that she had met a gentleman whom she had not seen for a long time, and who knew her husband. No doubt this was true in substance if not in fact. She had not seen Goldie for a long time, and Goldie did not know the man she married. Goldie, there was reason to believe, had been abroad, for he had disappeared from Newcastle, and his friends had lost sight of him Was it not extremely probable, when all these things were taken into consideration, that he had betaken himself to some foreign country, and after long residence there, had been induced to return to his native land? To suggest a theory for his being in Edinburgh was not so easy; but, without trying to assign a reason, let us admit that he found himself in Edinburgh, and there he accidentally met once again the woman who had years before disappointed his hopes

and blighted his life. She invited him to her home. What took place between them there could be but vaguely conjectured, but one thing was absolutely certain, the woman had died. She had died of a rare and almost unknown poison. Did she take it herself, or was it administered to her wilfully? If the latter, then murder had been committed. If the former, why had the strange man fled, thereby laying himself open to suspicion? The theory of suicide seemed to me hardly worth consideration. There was the bare possibility that the poison had been accidentally administered, and the man being frightened had fled; forgetting that by so doing he would lie under a grave suspicion of guilt. But the theory of accident I also dismissed, and determined in my own mind that it was murder, and that Goldie was the murderer. Therefore to find Goldie was my paramount duty.

During my investigations in Newcastle, I had ascertained that he had a brother living, and he had last been heard of in Hull. So I went to Hull, and soon learnt that a Robert Goldie kept a small second-hand furniture shop in the town, and I lost no time in waiting on Mr. Goldie, and the moment I looked at him, I was struck by the resemblance he bore to the description I had got of the man who had been seen by the policeman to come from the wynd on the morning of the murder.

It may be thought that this was mere fancy on my part, but I should have disputed that if any one had suggested it. Robert Goldie had been in business in Hull for about twelve years. He was married, and had a large family, and before seeking an interview with him I learnt that he bore the reputation of being a very steady, industrious, and hard-working man.

He was a member of the Board of Guardians in his parish, and also held the office of churchwarden. I proved beyond doubt that he had not been away from his home for many months, so that he could not be the destroyer of Mrs. Peterson's life.

"My object in calling upon you, Mr. Goldie," I began, as he ushered me into a little parlour behind his shop, "is to see if you can give me any information about your brother."

"Oh, lor', no!" he exclaimed, with an air of perfect sincerity. "I haven't seen or heard of Arthur for years. Did you know him?"

"No."

"What is your reason, then, for inquiring about him?"

"I will probably tell you that in a little while. How long is it since you last heard of him?"

"Well, now, let me see. I think it must be upwards of ten years."

"Where was he at that time?"

"In Jamaica, in the West Indies."

"In Jamaica!"

"Yes."

"What was he doing there?"

"He was a clerk, a foreman, or something like that, to a sugar planter."

"Why did he cease his correspondence with you?"

"Goodness knows. He was always an erratic fellow. When he last wrote he said he didn't like Jamaica, and thought of joining some friends on a gold prospecting expedition in Mexico."

"In Mexico!" I exclaimed, as it seemed to me that I had now got the first tangible link in the chain.

"Yes. That was very like him. He was fond of adventure."

"Do you know if he went?"

"Well, he never wrote to me again. I concluded from that that he had gone, and very likely died there."

"Would he have been likely to have written if something hadn't happened to him?"

"Ah, that I can't say. As I have already remarked, he was an erratic fellow, and nothing that he did would have surprised me."

I had a little further desultory conversation with Mr. Goldie, in which I endeavoured to get such particulars of his brother's appearance that might serve me to identify him with the description of the man from the wynd. In this, however, I was not very successful, as Mr. Goldie had not seen Arthur for so long.

During my interview, I had not seen a single sign that was suggestive of deception on Goldie's part. He seemed a perfectly straightforward and candid man, and I formed a very good opinion of him. Naturally, he was very anxious to know the object of my inquiries, but I deemed it advisable, in the interests of justice, to prevaricate, and I managed to avoid any direct statement, which would have aroused his suspicions. As I was about to take my leave, I said suddenly—

"By the way, if your brother was in England would he be likely to come and see you?"

"Oh, I don't think there is a doubt about that. He was always very fond of me, and he and I got on where the other members of the family did not. Yes; I should say he would be certain to come, or communicate with me in some way."

On the strength of this I resolved to set a watch upon the house in the hope that I should find Arthur Goldie's

track. About a fortnight later I received word that a man answering the description of Arthur, or rather of the one I suspected of being Arthur, had been observed going and coming from Robert Goldie's house. He remained a day or two in Hull, and then departed for London, being followed in his journey by one of my watchers, who tracked him to a house in Great Coram Street, where it was ascertained he was lodging. I immediately went up to London, and succeeded after a few days in getting a sight of Arthur Goldie; and, although he had shaved off his moustache, I could not help thinking he answered in most respects to the man of the wynd. Nevertheless, it would have been premature to have arrested him, and I began to plan out some means of searching his boxes for confirmatory evidence that he was the person wanted. Before I could do this, however, a strange thing happened. Whether he knew that he was being shadowed or not could never be ascertained, but one morning when his landlady took him up some coffee, as it was her wont to do, she found him dead in his bed. Under these circumstances an inquest became necessary, and a *post-mortem* examination was ordered, with the startling result that he was found to have died of the same kind of poison that had ended the life of the unfortunate Mrs. Peterson. None of the poison was discovered in his boxes or in any part of the house, but in the fireplace of his bedroom were the fragments of a phial that had been shivered to atoms against the grate. It was impossible to determine if this phial had held poison, but presumably it had. His papers and letters proved conclusively that Arthur Goldie had been resident in Mexico for a long time, and had returned to England some weeks before Mrs. Peterson's death.

It surely needed no more than this to justify one in saying that Arthur Goldie was her murderer. Up to that point everything was pretty clear. Beyond that all was mystery, and will probably remain a mystery to the end of time. Did he meet her in Edinburgh by design or accident? The probabilities are it was by accident. But, if so, how was it he had the poison with him; and, having it with him, was it the impulse of a moment, and because he had the means in his hand that led him to encompass her death? Or had he all through the years that had gone since he and she last parted cherished the craving for revenge; and, on returning once more to his native land, did he wander about in the hope of meeting her, and with some instinctive feeling that the hope would be realized, he always had that terrible poison with him? Was it a mere chance that threw them together at last, or did he manage to learn her whereabouts? All these questions the reader can answer as he feels inclined. For my part, I had brought the crime home to Arthur Goldie, but then the shadow of the grave came between us; and who can penetrate that? The grave holds its secrets well, and the human brain cannot learn them.

It only remains for me to say that amongst Goldie's effects a pocket-book was found. It was full of notes and memoranda of a very miscellaneous character. Some of them were riddles not to be read, others were common-place enough. But the following was certainly not a riddle, at least it didn't seem so to me:—

Dec. 8th, Edinburgh.
E. P. or S.
Painless.
Passed in sleep.

The E. P. stood for Emma Paterson, and the S. for

Sheldrake. He had known her as Sheldrake, and it was as Sheldrake that she had disappointed him. As to why he should have made note of his crime, those best acquainted with the criminal mind will give the best answer.

MRS. GAIRDNER'S WARD.

MRS. GAIRDNER was the widow of a well-known Edinburgh lawyer, who married early in life, but remained childless. This fact was a great disappointment to him, and seemed to prey upon his mind, but a few years before his death he found some compensation in having a girl child, the child of an old and esteemed friend of his, placed under his care.

Mr. Carl Demmer was a German, who had been settled in Edinburgh for many years, carrying on business as an engraver and lithographer. When he was about forty he married a very pretty girl who was an assistant in one of the fashionable shops in Prince's Street. She was at least twenty years his junior, but Demmer seems to have been devoted to her in no ordinary manner. A year later pretty Mrs. Demmer lay dead, but her baby was left to console the distracted husband. It was said that from the moment he heard that his wife had passed away Demmer never held up his head again. By perseverance and industry he had managed to amass a very snug fortune, and besides which his wife, a few months before her death, succeeded to money, so that the future of the motherless child seemed to be secure. Mr. Demmer had not got on very well with his wife's relatives. They had made themselves exceedingly disagreeable, as they had been desirous that the young lady who became his wife should marry the son of a wealthy shipowner. This youth was said to be the heir to a vast fortune, but his

reputation was as shady as it could possibly be. He had professed great admiration for Miss Gilroy, the young lady in question, and not only made her a written offer of marriage, but said he would settle a thousand a year on her for life. Apart, however, from the fact that he was exceedingly ugly, his doings had given him a most unenviable notoriety. Miss Gilroy, therefore, emphatically refused his offer, and declined to have anything whatever to do with him. This was the cause of great annoyance to her people, who thought infinitely more of the money than they did of the young woman's happiness; and as at this time it became known that Demmer had been secretly paying court to her, they expressed themselves in no measured terms against him, saying that he was a "low, sneaking German," and other hard things, which, while lacking in truth, served to display the intense bitterness of their feelings.

In spite of the opposition of her people, Miss Gilroy remained staunch to the man of her choice, notwithstanding that he was old enough to be her father. But she knew he was an upright, honest, and conscientious man, therefore likely to make her an excellent husband. Nor were the means to comfort wanting, for Demmer—as already stated—had accumulated money; so she married him, much to the disgust of her people, who seemed to take every possible means to make themselves as disagreeable as they could be. Had it been in their power to prevent the young wife from succeeding to the money she was legally entitled to, they would have done so. But they had no control over it, and they could only relieve their feelings by railing still more against her husband.

Had it not been for these family bickerings and

differences, young Mrs. Demmer's married life would have been well nigh perfect, but her relatives never ceased to annoy her; and, humanly speaking, this annoyance had such an irritating effect upon her, that her constitution—never strong—was undermined, and when she was called upon by Nature to fulfil the universal law, her strength was so sapped that she was unable to bear up against the strain imposed, and quietly quitted the world where vulgar, sordid greed had thrown such a shadow over her young life.

Now it seems almost incredible that her people, who had done so much to annoy her, should have had the daring and presumption to try to get possession of her child. But herein they were foiled. The father could not forget the shameful way he had been treated, and he expressed his determination of having nothing whatever to do with his late wife's connections.

That his wife's death was a very heavy blow to him was obvious to every one acquainted with him. He became a moody, silent man, and the only people he seemed to show any partiality for were his lawyer, Mr. Gairdner, and Mr. Gairdner's family. Gairdner had transacted his legal affairs for a long time, and between the two men a very strong friendship existed. The childless Mrs. Gairdner manifested a strong motherly affection for little Christine Demmer, and she and her husband were like a mother and father to the child. When Christine was about five years of age Mr. Demmer fell into very bad health. He had never got over the loss of his wife, and had often been heard to express a wish to join her. Believing that his end was now approaching, he settled everything he possessed on his little girl, and appointed his friend Gairdner the child's guardian. In the event of Gairdner's death

before Christine attained her majority, Mrs. Gairdner was to take charge of her, and further provision was made for the contingency of Mrs. Gairdner's death.

These matters settled, poor Carl Demmer soon lapsed into a condition that at once precluded all hope, and after lingering for a few months he passed away to where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

Two years later Mr. Gairdner also laid down the burden of life, and thus his widow became the sole and responsible guardian of little Christine Demmer, whose father, before his death, had expressed a strong wish that the child might be allowed to spend a few years of her life in Germany, in order that she might acquire his mother tongue. Mrs. Gairdner respected this wish, and a few months after her husband's decease she removed to Hanover, where she spent a considerable time. Then she travelled about Germany a good deal, and finally took up her residence in Berlin, returning to Edinburgh when Christine was a little over fourteen.

By this time Miss Demmer had developed into a remarkably beautiful girl. Both her mother and father had been fair, and she had inherited a blonde beauty which made her conspicuous. She had a wealth of hair that was almost like woven gold, and lustrous dark violet eyes that were calculated to set every young man sighing, while her complexion was of that delicate peach-like tint which is so marked a feature in the blonde type where the health is good. Christine not only enjoyed good health, but the best of spirits, and seemed greatly attached to her foster-mother and guardian, who could not have bestowed more loving affection on the girl even if she had really been her own child.

A few years later, that is, when she was about nineteen, Christine Demmer fell in love, as it was only a natural thing to do. She had had some little mild flirtations before this, but they were of that harmless character which most young and good-looking girls indulge in. She was greatly admired, not only for her physical beauty, but for the sweetness of her disposition, and of course her admirers vied with each other in paying her compliments, and she would hardly have had a woman's nature if her head had not been a little bit turned by all this. But at nineteen she found herself really in love. The lucky young man was two or three years her senior, and bore a very high character. He was the only son of Professor Sinclair, who held the Chair of Botany in the University.

Alfred Sinclair and Christine Demmer seemed in every possible way suited to each other. He was a fine, handsome, clever young man, full of promise, and ambitious of distinguishing himself. His father and Christine's guardian both approved of the match, and the young couple seemed to have good cause to congratulate themselves on the way fortune was favouring them. It really appeared as if things could not have looked brighter, nor all have been more in accord with their hearts' wishes, if they—the young couple—themselves had had the ordering of their own fate. But there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, and summer storms with startling suddenness often obscure the blueness of the sky. In their case these similes were to find verification, as will presently be seen.

By a special provision in Mr. Demmer's will, whereby he appointed his friend Gairdner guardian of Christine, or in the event of his death Mrs. Gairdner,

powers were given to the guardian to place Christine in full possession of her fortune before reaching her majority, should it seem advisable that the girl should have control of the money before arriving at the age of twenty-one. Although at first it had been suggested that the young couple should wait before committing themselves to matrimony until Christine was twenty-one, circumstances arose whereby it seemed desirable that they should marry before then. One of these circumstances was the fact that young Sinclair had received a lucrative and very promising appointment in the University of Heidelberg, and it was necessary that he should take up his residence there without delay.

The prospect of parting from her lover, although the distance was not great, affected Christine to such an extent that her guardian was greatly distressed, and, after taking counsel with Professor Sinclair, it was decided that if the young people desired it they should be married forthwith, and the young wife could then accompany her husband to his own sphere of duties, and Mrs. Gairdner determined that she would go also. Therefore, in accordance with the power conferred upon her by the late Carl Demmer's will, she lost no time in taking steps to place Christine in full possession of her inheritance. When this was done the girl was just twenty. Then the marriage day was fixed, and all seemed to be going as smoothly as any one could possibly have desired. The girl was full of a great joy, and as busy as a bee in making preparations for the great event which was to change her sphere in life.

The time was towards the end of May, and the wedding had been fixed to take place on the 3rd of

June, so that now, as it seemed, but little time intervened before the beautiful Christine Demmer would pass to her husband's home and loving companionship.

On the evening of the 29th of May young Sinclair visited his affianced bride, who was at that time staying with her guardian in Berwick. Mrs. Gairdner had not been very well, and she had taken a cottage at Berwick for the sake of change and sea air, and she and her ward and two servants had been staying there for about a fortnight. The cottage was a detached one, standing in its own grounds and close to the sea. The situation was delightful, and the two ladies enjoyed it very much. On the 29th of May Alfred Sinclair ran down to Berwick from Edinburgh, and a number of young people were assembled to meet him, and indulge in some games. In the early part of the evening the young couple had a lovers' stroll along the beach. The weather was exceptionally fine at that time, and Nature seemed to be in perfect repose. But about seven o'clock the sky became overcast, the gloom gradually deepened, and a violent thunderstorm burst. This did not interfere, however, with the enjoyment of the little party gathered in the house occupied by Mrs. Gairdner. It was noticed, however, that Christine was a little more thoughtful than usual. She was generally very lively and full of animal spirits, but on this particular evening there was an apparent inclination to be silent. Mrs. Gairdner detected this, and asked her if the storm had affected her nerves, or if she was suffering from headache or anything. But to this the young lady replied—

"Oh, no, mamma"—she always called her guardian by the affectionate name of mamma—"oh, no, mamma, I am quite well."

" But you are not as lively as your wont."

" Am I not ? " said Christine, with a strange expression in her eyes, which attracted Mrs. Gairdner's attention, and somewhat alarmed her, so that she took Christine's hands between her own in a loving, motherly way, and, kissing her tenderly on the forehead, she said softly—

" Christine, I am sure you are not quite yourself this evening."

" Am I not ? " exclaimed the girl, with a slight forced laugh.

" No, you are not. Have you a headache ? "

" No, mamma."

" Or a heartache ? " suggested the lady.

" Oh, mamma," was the answer, " how can you think such a thing possible ? "

" Everything is possible in this world."

" True, true, mamma ; but how could I have a heartache when I am rich in the love of so excellent a man as Alfred Sinclair ? "

During all the time that the courtship had been going on, Mrs. Gairdner had never for one brief instant seen the slightest cause to suppose that Christine was not perfectly happy in her choice, and Sinclair was beyond all doubt her choice. She had had, perhaps, more than the average opportunities which fall to the lot of a young girl of selecting a lover after her own taste. For one so singularly attractive as she was could not fail to have admirers by the dozen ; and then it was well known that she was an heiress. Moreover, her faithful guardian had watched her with jealous eye, and exercised studious care in seeing that she formed no acquaintances with undesirable people. Consequently those with whom the girl mixed and amongst whom she

moved were people of the best class. In this respect, then, Christine had been exceptionally fortunate; and while carefully avoiding anything that might seem arbitrary, her guardian, with true womanly gentleness, endeavoured to mould her ward's tastes in such a way that they might insensibly be guided in the right channel. Mrs. Gairdner was a woman of singular tact and shrewdness, and in every way fitted to have the making of a young girl's happiness. While carefully avoiding narrow-mindedness and bigotry, she had a due regard for the necessity of laying down a set of rules to be rigidly followed, and of training the tender mind to respect those things which tend to elevate, and to beget in a girl a strong veneration for all that is good and true.

Christine had certainly proved an apt scholar, and the teacher had good cause to congratulate herself. Then, when her ward met Sinclair, Mrs. Gairdner felt as if the crown had been placed upon her work, for she made the most exhaustive inquiries about Alfred, and found him to be without blemish. His honour was stainless. He was well connected, clever, ambitious, and bore the reputation of being a model young man. Mrs. Gairdner watched the developing love of her ward with a sense of keen delight, feeling intuitively that if ever two people had been made for each other they were Christine Demmer and Alfred Sinclair. All had gone smoothly and well up to that May night in Berwick, when the quick eye of the lady detected a certain shadow on her ward's face that had never rested there before. At any rate, she had never seen it. And now, in her anxiety for all that concerned the welfare and happiness of the girl, the lady took her to her room, the window of which overlooked the sea. By this time the

storm had quite passed. The rain had ceased. There was a delicious freshness in the air. The sea was slightly ruffled by a gentle breeze. The sky was filled with broken masses of picturesque clouds, and from the rents in the cloud curtains the moon poured down a flood of light that called into being great tracts of silvery sheen on the dancing waters.

The lady drew the curtains from the windows so that the beauty of the night might be fully revealed. Then she seated herself in one of the window recesses, while Christine occupied a stool at her feet, and rested her white. hands on her guardian's knees, while her eyes were fixed on that beautiful picture of sea and sky and silver moonlight. For a time there was silence between the two. Mrs. Gairdner stroked the soft hair of the girl, and allowed her to meditate; for meditation at such an hour and in such a place has a soothing tendency, and is calculated to call the moral forces into play.

"It is a lovely night, Christine," whispered the lady at last.

"Yes, mamma, it is."

"We mustn't stay away long," pursued Mrs Gairdner, "or our young friends will think us rude for leaving them, and Alfred will miss you and grow sad."

"Ah!" sighed Christine.

"Why that sigh, dear?" asked the lady.

"Did I sigh?"

"Of course you did."

"Now, Christine, darling, I want you to show your heart entirely to me to-night. Up to an hour or two ago I thought I knew it thoroughly. Now I feel as if there was one little corner of it which has been con-

cealed from me. In that corner lingers there a regret at your approaching nuptials? Have you seen anything in Alfred's manner or conduct towards you which has caused you to think you have made a mistake in selecting him as the keeper of your future happiness?"

"Oh, no, no, mamma!" cried Christine passionately. "Alfred is absolutely perfect, and I love him with all my heart and all my soul. On him my hopes are set. Without him I shall die." Here she burst into tears, and, bowing her face in her guardian's lap, she sobbed bitterly.

Mrs. Gairdner was not only surprised, but alarmed.

"Christine! Christine!" she said tenderly, "what is it? What distresses you?"

Here Christine rose up suddenly, and stretching herself to her full height she dashed her tears away with her handkerchief. Her guardian noticed that she was pale as the moonlight shone upon her, and there was a distressful look in the beautiful eyes which was altogether foreign to them.

"Forgive me, mamma," the girl said. "I am foolish, very foolish, but this stupid fit will pass off. Do let us go downstairs again, or I really do think I shall get melancholy."

The lady hastily drew the curtain over the window, shutting out that marvellous picture, and then, taking the girl's hand, she said—

"Come, dear, let us go."

Mrs. Gairdner's distress was still as great as ever, but she felt it would be imprudent to harass her ward with questions so long as she was in that strange mood. So they went down together, and as they entered the well-lighted room the young people were engaged in some game; but Alfred Sinclair was standing apart. As

soon, however, as he saw his *fiancée* enter, he went hurriedly to her, and whispered—

"Where have you been to, dearie? The room has seemed empty without you."

"I have been upstairs with mamma. We have been admiring the beauty of the night. The heavens are a poem, the sea a picture, such as the hand of man can never paint."

"I do declare you are quite sentimental to-night," returned Alfred, with a little laugh; and feeling perfectly happy now that he was once more beside her, he took her hand and led her to the centre of the room to join in the game with which the guests were then amusing themselves.

Later on in the evening Mrs. Gairdner drew him on one side and said—

"Alfred, I don't think Christine is quite herself to-night. It is nothing, of course, and will soon pass away; but I want you to speak very kindly, very soothingly to her; and, Alfred, ask her as you have done over and over again, as I know you have, if she loves you as a woman should love her future husband."

The young man started. It was the first time that he had felt the thorn in the rose. There was a certain suggestiveness in the lady's words which caused him a little pang of alarm. She noticed this, and said quickly so as to reassure him—

"Don't attach too much importance to my words. I am apt to be supersensitive where the happiness of this dear child is concerned, and perhaps to-night I am a degree nervous."

In spite of this remark, the sting of the thorn still made itself felt, so that Alfred experienced an anxiety

that had never before troubled him since he first became acquainted with Christine.

He was to remain there until the following day, and when that night the others had left for their homes he took Christine's hand and whispered—

"Let us go to the door, dear, for a few minutes before retiring."

She went with him willingly, and they walked down the little garden to the wicket-gate, and before them stretched the sea, whitened somewhat by the wavelets that flashed and foamed, for the wind had freshened. The sky was in part clear, in part covered with great banks of clouds, but from the unclouded part came the effulgence of the moon, and imparted to the scene an unspeakable grandeur. The lovers were touched by this chastened beauty. What lovers with a grain of sentiment would not have been? Love begets sentiment, and very little serves to call the sentiment forth. Alfred's arm stole round the waist of this dear woman, and his free hand grasped hers, and as he thus held her, he said, in tones so low that they could reach no other ears but hers—

"Christine, is it possible?—pardon the question, dear—but is it possible that your love for me could cool?"

She raised both her arms and flung them around his neck as she exclaimed—

"Oh, my darling, how could you dream of such a thing? I love you—I love you, Alfred, and nothing on earth could change my love."

He was happy again. The thorn was withdrawn, its sting was no longer felt. A few minutes later, as midnight rang out, they re-entered the house. Alfred was going to lock and bolt the door, but Christine said she

would do it. Ten minutes later he wished her a tender good-night, and they separated.

The morning broke. A stormy morning it was. The wind had freshened. The sea was tumbling on the beach with a sullen roar, and the sky was overcast with a heavy pall-like gloom. It was a fitting morning for the revelation that was to be made. Mrs. Gairdner sent down word that she had a headache and would not rise just then. The servant who brought the message also told Alfred that she thought Miss Demmer was sleeping, for though she had knocked at the door she had got no answer, whereupon Alfred requested the maid not to disturb Christine, but let her sleep, as no doubt she was fagged after the preceding day's exertions. He then proceeded to take his breakfast alone. The meal finished, he lighted a cigar and strolled forth on to the beach. He was away over an hour. When he returned he found the house in a state of wild alarm. The startling discovery had been made that Christine's bed had never been slept in, and she was nowhere to be found. Like a thunder-shock the news came upon him. Mrs. Gairdner was almost mad with grief, and he was not far short of being distracted. He certainly felt like one who had been stunned and dazed by a sudden blow. Then he remembered Mrs. Gairdner's words and the little incident of the evening before, and naturally, very naturally, his first thought was he had been shamefully deceived; but he put this thought from him almost as soon as formed. Christine—his Christine—deceive him? Pooh! the very idea was preposterous; yet many minutes had not elapsed before horrible confirmation, as it seemed, of his worst thoughts was forthcoming. A letter was sent down to him. It was amongst some that had just been delivered to Mrs. Gairdner. It bore

the Berwick postmark. It was in Christine's handwriting. For a moment he held the envelope, held it with trembling hand. Some intuitive feeling told him that that missive was one of terrible import, and the colour fled from his face. At last he tore the sealed flap asunder, unfolded the sheet of paper it contained, and with eyes that seemed to be starting from his head, he read these lines—

"Forgive me. I know I am hideously wicked, but I cannot help it. I love another. I go to him. Seek me not. Farewell!"

The paper fluttered from his hand, and staggering to a chair, he sank into it, bowed his face in his hands, and sobbed like a child that is stricken with uncontrollable grief. At this stage Mrs. Gairdner entered. She, too, was in a state of terrible mental depression. She noticed his agony, and she saw the sheet of paper lying on the floor. She stooped, picked it up, and read it. Then with a piercing cry of agony, like one who receives a deadly shock, she fell at full length, and remained motionless. Alfred sprang to her aid, and summoned further assistance, and the unhappy lady was conveyed to her room, and medical aid called in. It really seemed for some time as if the unfortunate patient would not recover, but slowly she returned to consciousness and reason, and her sympathies instantly displayed themselves for the broken-hearted lover. Taking his hand, she said—

"You must forget her, you must forget her, Alfred, and never again place faith in woman."

How easy it was to give that advice. How easy to say, "Forget her;" but, alas! how hard, how hard to follow it out. Forget the woman whom he had worshipped? Forget her, who had been his heart, his life, his dream?

"No, Mrs. Gairdner, I cannot forget her. I will not, dare not believe she is a free agent in this matter. She who was so gentle, so truthful, so honest, so sterling. There is some trickery. She has been bewitched. Some cursed power has been brought to bear upon her, to turn her from the path she was treading. She must be found. She shall be found. And not until I hear from her own lips that her love for me is dead will I believe it."

Mrs. Gairdner shook her head sadly, and sighed—

"It is useless your seeking her. She who could deceive us all like this is not worth seeking. Let her go. Let her go."

Mrs. Gairdner's bitterness against the ward whom she had nurtured so tenderly, and whose happiness she had studied for so many years, was perhaps justified, as she viewed the matter from her point of view. But a true lover's faith is strong; and Alfred's faith did credit alike to his head and heart. Leaving the distracted and deeply injured lady to her grief, he hastened to Edinburgh and sought my assistance. He told me the woful story, told it all with the pathos of one whose heart had been cruelly wrenched, and as a lover who still loved, even though he had been deceived.

I am free to confess that, on the first blush, I was almost disposed to believe with Mrs. Gairdner that it was better to let the young lady go; better whistle her down the wind a prey to fortune. It did seem to me in the early stage that it was another terrible illustration of woman's inconstancy, man's perfidy. Another had fascinated her. She had lent a secret ear to his pleadings, even while professing undying love for this unhappy fellow who now appealed to me to trace the path she had taken to her own ruin. However, I

could not resist his appeal, and returned at once with him to Berwick.

We found Mrs. Gairdner still suffering severely, and the doctor had given orders that she was to be kept very quiet. But when she heard that Alfred was in the house, she insisted on seeing him; and when he told her I was there, she insisted on seeing me also. Poor lady! how I did feel for her, and sympathize with her, she was so deeply stricken with a grief that seemed as if it would surely press her into her grave. But when I had been with her for some little time, when I had drawn from her a graphic word picture of her ward, and learned how all her life that ward had had the very highest regard for honour and truth, I began to think that she could only have been won from the true happiness that was hers by some strange machinations that had made a slave of her will. Unless by a subtle analysis of my own feelings, I could scarcely tell by what process of deduction I came to the conclusion that there was some, at present, inscrutable mystery about the affair, and if that mystery could only be cleared up, a different complexion might be put upon this remarkable disappearance.

The letter which Sinclair had received was given to me. It certainly did seem just the sort of letter that a foolish girl would write who had allowed herself to be led away. At the same time Sinclair gave me another letter to read which he had received from her the day before he went down to Berwick. He allowed me to read this to show the contrast. It was an outpouring of the soul on the part of a young woman who devotedly loved the man she was writing to. It was not a sickly sentimental letter, and yet it breathed love in every page. It bore, too, the

ring of truth and honesty. A woman who could write such an epistle as that, and yet a few hours later go off with some other man, would be a remarkable woman indeed; and I asked myself if, after what I had heard of Christine's character, she was the woman to do such a thing. Most certainly it struck me in a very forcible way, and my idea that there was something extraordinary in the whole business was strengthened. Presently I found myself comparing that letter with the brief note sent to Sinclair after the girl's flight, and I fancied I detected certain discrepancies in the handwriting, and without mentioning this, I requested that I might be allowed to take the two documents away. The request was granted, and when I returned home I carefully examined the letters under a powerful magnifying glass, and came to the conclusion that they had not been written by the same person. The brief note announcing the flight was a wonderfully good imitation of the love-letter, but a critical examination and comparison of the letters revealed an unmistakable difference in the writing. The difference was so obvious that it quite justified the conclusion I came to; and I felt positive that the note was a forgery. But that only served to deepen the mystery. Who had committed the forgery, and why had it been committed? That certainly was a problem that wanted much working out, but I set to work to do it.

I lost no time in waiting on Alfred Sinclair, and if it was consolation, I was enabled to console him by the expression of a positive opinion that the note was a forgery. This suggested naturally that the poor girl was the victim of a vile conspiracy, but what the purpose of that conspiracy was, could only be vaguely guessed

at that stage of the proceedings. The letter had been posted in Berwick on the same morning it was received by Mrs. Gairdner, and this, to my mind, was most suggestive when taken in conjunction with the obvious forgery. To a casual observer the writing was a good imitation of Miss Demmer's writing, but when critically tested and examined it presented such marked discrepancies, that no one with pretensions to intelligence could be deceived. Now came the question, Why had the forgery been committed? If Miss Demmer had really eloped with a lover whom she preferred to her affianced husband, why did she not write the letter herself? I could really think of no reasonable theory to suggest a why and wherefore of such a proceeding. Consequently, I came to the conclusion that some very deep and sinister design had actuated the forger, and my opinion was—though I did not express it then—that Miss Demmer had been inveigled away by some specious argument, and was detained against her will.

Such a strong hold did this idea take upon me, that I deemed it expedient to go down at once to Berwick and get the girl's history from Mrs. Gairdner. The poor lady was in a very prostrate condition, but the urgency of the case made it imperative that there should be no delay. She recognized this fact, and, therefore, braced herself up for the effort. And when she had given me all the details, as I have set them forth in the early part of this narrative, I inclined strongly to the belief that Christine had been abducted by some of her relatives, but for what purpose it was not easy to even guess at then.

I now set to work to try and determine how the young lady left Berwick. One little incident that Sinclair mentioned to me was that, when they went into

the house after standing at the gate for some time, she would not allow him to bolt or otherwise fasten the door. She had an object in that clearly, and she either left it unfastened or studied the fastenings so that she would know how to undo them easily. Her flight, therefore, had all been prearranged. She must have left very soon after the family had retired, for the servants rose at six, and had she delayed until they were up, her plans would have been frustrated. Leaving at the early hour she did, she could not have got a train either going north or south. A horse and trap leaving the town in the dead of night would have been sure to have attracted attention, but I could find no one who had seen such a thing. It, therefore, occurred to me that she might have left by water; and, pursuing my investigations, I came across some fishermen who, returning from their fishing ground at about four in the morning, noticed a strange steam yacht moving off from near the shore, and heading for the sea. I also learnt at the coastguard station that a steam yacht had been noticed cruising about during the evening, dodging on and off the land. Her name could not be determined, but a very accurate description was supplied to me, and I lost no time in telegraphing this description to the various ports that it seemed to me likely she might put into.

In a short time I got word that a steam yacht answering the description, and called the *Lily*, had put into the Tyne, where she was still lying. I at once started for Newcastle, and found the *Lily* without any difficulty. She was owned by a London gentleman named Bainbridge. The crew of the yacht, however, had not seen him for a long time, as he was an invalid, but they had received instructions to steam from the

Thames to the north with a gentleman whose name was understood to be Ferndale, and whose orders were to be obeyed. They went to Berwick, rowed to the shore at about two o'clock in the morning, and conveyed a young lady on board. They were then told to proceed with all possible haste to Newcastle, and, arrived there, the young lady and Mr. Ferndale landed, and went to London, it was believed.

These particulars most certainly did point, as it seemed, to an elopement, but Mr. Ferndale was described as an old man, probably sixty. This deepened the mystery; for was it possible that Christine would have abandoned a handsome young fellow with brilliant prospects like Sinclair, for an old man who might have been her grandfather? My next step towards the unravelment of this strange case was to hurry up to London and seek an interview with Mr. Bainbridge, who I found was in a very bad state of health. He did not know Ferndale, nor anything about him, but his son did, and it was through the son the yacht was lent to Ferndale.

It became an easy matter to trace Ferndale through Mr. Bainbridge's son. I soon learnt that Ferndale was a money-lender, with a somewhat seedy reputation; and as young Bainbridge was, as I was informed, a wild and extravagant young rascal, his friendship and connection with Ferndale might be accounted for.

Ferndale lived at Putney Heath in a somewhat lonely house. It was detached and walled in. In a few days I had gained this startling piece of information. Mr. Ferndale had a young lady confined in his house. She was said to be a relative of his, and of weak intellect, and he had undertaken the charge. It was necessary for me to apply for a magistrate's warrant,

which was granted to me on my sworn affidavit that Christine had been forcibly abducted from her guardian's care for some illegal purpose, and was detained against her will. Armed with this warrant, and accompanied by an officer from Scotland Yard, I went to Mr. Ferndale's house, where we found Miss Demmer shut up in a large room, the windows of which were barred with iron bars. A woman had been appointed to look after her, and the poor girl was in such a state of terrible excitement and prostration that it was quite thought by the servants in the house that she was out of her mind.

Ferndale was not at home when we called, and we removed the girl before he returned. I immediately telegraphed to Arthur Sinclair that we had found her, and he came up to London by the next train. The meeting between the lovers who had been so cruelly separated was of the most touching character. When she was able she told us the following remarkable story:—

Some time before she had one day been accosted in the streets of Edinburgh by a strange man, who told her that, though she did not know of it, she had a sister living, but for reasons that could not then be explained this sister had been cast off by her father, and was living in London in a shattered state of health. Mrs. Gairdner had been placed under oath by the late Mr. Demmer never to allude to this sister, and never to recognize her. Therefore, Christine was enjoined not to mention the subject to her guardian. At first the girl was incredulous, but the man, in order to convince her, and who represented himself as her uncle, showed her letters purporting to have been written by the sister —his niece—to him, praying and begging that Christine

might be sought out, and entreated her to see her before she died. The man—her assumed uncle—saw Christine several times after this, and succeeded in so playing on her feelings that she was induced to write to him, and ultimately to go to London clandestinely to see the sister who was said to be dying there, and when Ferndale knew she was to stay in Berwick for some time he arranged to come there in a yacht and take her south. She wrote a letter to her guardian saying she would only be absent a few days, and would explain all when she returned. She entrusted this to Ferndale to post, but it is needless to say he never posted it; but in its stead forged a note, seemingly written in her handwriting, and this he posted in Berwick, addressed to Alfred Sinclair. That note was the one that first aroused my suspicions.

When she got to Ferndale's house his motives became apparent. He confessed to her that the story of the sister was a fabrication, and he intended to keep her there, representing her to be insane, unless she consented to write to her guardian for five thousand pounds, which was to be paid as the price of Christine's liberty, if not her life.

A more audacious, more impudent, more daring scheme to raise money had seldom been concocted—at any rate, not in this country. Ferndale, whose real name was Hopekirk, was really Mrs. Demmer's brother and Christine's uncle; but he had led a most shady career, and was in great pecuniary distress when he resorted to this desperate course of raising money. He had for a long time been in business as a money-lender, but had latterly become involved through betting and other transactions, and this had caused him to turn his attention to his niece as an instrument whereby he

might replenish his exhausted exchequer. In this wicked design I am happy to say he was thwarted. Of course, it will be said that Christine Demmer must have been a very weak-minded and silly girl to be deceived in such a manner and consent to go away, knowing, as she must have done, that the distress of her lover and friends would be terrible. She certainly was foolish, to say the least of it, and she had cause indeed to congratulate herself that I was enabled to rescue her from the perilous position in which she was placed at the time I did. There is little doubt that had she not been rescued her mind would really have become unhinged. As it was, she suffered very much from the shock for a long time.

I had the satisfaction of not only restoring her to the arms of her lover, but of bringing Ferndale to justice, and in due course he suffered condign punishment for his crime.

THE DEESIDE MYSTERY.

Deeside was agitated in a way that it had rarely been before. Throughout the district for many miles the gossips retailed the news, with exaggerations and additions of course; not that the affair was not mysterious and strange enough in itself, but most people when repeating a story are given to little variations to suit their own particular tastes and views, and so when once a rumour has begun to spread, he would be a wise man indeed who would venture to predict the shape it will ultimately assume before it is a thing of the past. The Deeside folk did not often get anything in the shape of an excitement, the weather and the crops, with an occasional comment on the political situation, and, of course, the "Kirk," were the chief topics of conversation; and the round of life pursued in the country districts was monotonous enough. Each season brought its own particular work, each day its own particular duty; but each season and each day was so like another, that it was little short of a luxury if something happened that afforded the population a new sensation. The weather, of course, was prolific in change, for if it was not blowing, it was snowing; and if it was not snowing it was raining; and two or three times a year the sun shone, and that was regarded as such an event that it was fruitful of talk for some time. Under such conditions of existence people may really be pardoned for rising to a pitch of excitement when anything extraordinary does occur. As a rule, the Deeside folk were

not an excitable race, on the contrary, they were characterized as phlegmatic, and it was said by their maligners that nothing short of a cataclysm could urge them to increase the pace which they and their forbears had moved at for generations and generations. But now the news that was running like wildfire round the country-side really did arouse them to unwonted activity, and the consumption of whisky was almost as great as it was when the funeral of some well-known and popular resident took place. The cause of it all was this. A young man named Alexander Duff, who was a soldier, had been abroad with his regiment for five years. He had come home on furlough to visit his people. A week later, he started with a companion named Archibald Philp for a day's fishing on Loch Davan. Philp was a young man of about twenty, and Duff was six or seven and twenty. They were both sons of farmers, and had known each other from childhood. They both belonged to the neighbourhood of Aboyne, where their people had farmed for generations.

In the course of the afternoon Philp returned from the excursion alone, and expressed great surprise that Duff had not arrived. He said that they reached the loch together, and procured a boat from an old man named James M'Tavish, who lived with his wife and half-idiot son in a lonely sheeling on the shores of the loch. Old M'Tavish being confined to his bed with a severe attack of rheumatism could not accompany the young men, but he directed them to a particular part of the loch where good sport was generally to be obtained. Thither they went, and after fishing for a couple of hours, Duff requested to be put ashore, as he was not a very enthusiastic fisherman, but had a smattering of botany, and he wished to collect some plants. So he

landed, saying he would come back in an hour, and his companion returned to the fishing.

Several hours passed and Duff had not returned.

Philp, according to his own account, thought it was rather strange conduct, but attached no particular importance to it; and as the day was waning he gathered up the spoil and the tackle, returned the boat to M'Tavish, inquiring of Mrs. M'Tavish if she had seen Duff, but she told him she had not set her eyes on him since he went off in the morning in the boat. So Philp pursued his journey home alone, expecting, of course, as he said, to find his companion there. However, Duff was not there, nor did he come back that day, nor the next day, nor at all. It was not until the second day that any uneasiness was felt by his parents and relatives; and when the third day came without any news of the absent man, foul play was suspected, and Philp was questioned pretty severely, but he adhered to his statement without the slightest variation. The fourth day the suspicion grew that there had been foul play, and it began to be whispered that probably the young men had quarrelled in the boat, and Philp had pushed his companion into the water. These hints and suspicions against young Philp necessarily caused his parents and relatives great annoyance, as well as irritated them considerably, so that between the two families there was serious friction. But the clamour grew, and what was at first mere whisperings swelled into loud accusations. Although it seemed a hopeless task, the loch was dragged, but without result, and for miles and miles around the country was searched, but still no trace of the missing man was got. The M'Tavishes could give no information. The old man was in bed, and did not see the two young fellows at all, he giving them the

necessary information through his wife. Young M'Tavish, a lad about two and twenty, was an imbecile; and all that Mrs. M'Tavish knew was that she saw Philp and Duff go off in the boat, and later in the day Philp came back alone. Day after day went by, and the extraordinary disappearance of young Duff was the common topic of conversation. All sorts of theories were suggested, but the balance of opinion was certainly against Philp, although he and the missing man were known to be great friends and very fond of each other; while any motive for a crime beyond a sudden quarrel could not be thought of. Nevertheless, Philp's arrest was advocated; but beyond the very barest suspicion there was nothing to justify it then.

On the tenth day from Duff's strange disappearance, a shepherd, accompanied by two collies, was coming through a wood on a hillside on the left shore of Loch Davan, when one of his dogs showed great uneasiness, and began to whine and howl, then it suddenly rushed towards a thicket and commenced scratching at the ground. Not being Sunday, the shepherd whistled for the dog, but it did not obey the summons, and the shepherd, thinking there might be a dead sheep there, went to the thicket, when to his horror he saw a man's hand protruding from a heap of leaves which the dog had scratched away. As it was obvious that there was a dead man lying there, the old shepherd, without disturbing the ground any further, called his dogs off and hurried for assistance.

In the course of half-an-hour, he and several others returned to the spot, the leaves were removed, and the corpse of a man brought to light. It was at once suspected that it must be the body of Duff, but none of those present knew him by sight, so they got Mrs.

M'Tavish on the scene, but she could not pronounce a definite opinion, as the face had been partly destroyed by some animal; so Mr. Duff was sent for, and when he arrived he had no difficulty in identifying the body as that of his son.

As soon as possible a medical man was got to examine the body, and he found that the base of the skull was fractured in a terrible manner, injuring the brain in such a way that death was inevitable. All the appearances pointed to the unfortunate young man having been brutally beaten over the back of the head with a blunt instrument. The instrument in all probability being a stick. Now it was certain that Duff did not beat himself over the head with a stick, and therefore it was a case of murder; and with the weakness of human nature to jump at hasty conclusions, people did not hesitate to say that Philp had murdered his companion, and this accusation certainly did seem justified when the day after the discovery of the body young Philp was missing. It then seemed to every one that the young fellow stood self-condemned. If he was guiltless, why had he gone away? His flight was evidence of his guilt, surely; and so the hue and cry was raised, and popular opinion was dead against the fugitive. He had earned for himself a somewhat unenviable reputation. He was said to be unsteady, and was fond of going into the towns and spending his time in public-houses; and so having got a bad name, the ready kick to hurry him down the hill was forthcoming. Of course if he had committed the crime there must have been a motive for it, and the preconceived opinion was that the motive was robbery. But on Duff's body his watch and chain were found, as well as a sum of money amounting nearly to four pounds,

while on his finger was a gold ring worth a couple of pounds at least. But while his money and his watch and chain were all right, there was one thing missing. It was a scarf-pin, a very peculiar one, almost unique in its way, and one of which Duff had been very proud. The story which he told to his parents about this pin was as follows:—

One day while he was in India he and a companion were out in a jungle in search of small game, when they were suddenly confronted by a tiger, which, at great peril and risk to themselves, they managed to slay. As a souvenir of the event, Duff secured one of the animal's teeth, which, subsequently, he had had made into a scarfpin by one of the renowned gold-workers of Benares. The tooth was surrounded in the middle by a solid band of chased gold, while at each end of the tooth a small but very good diamond was set, and, of course, the pin itself was attached to the central band of gold. Altogether, it formed a very striking article of adornment, and Duff said it had been valued at from twenty-five to thirty pounds.

Now this pin was missing. Where had it gone to? Was it in order to obtain possession of the geegaw that the terrible crime had been committed?

In a few days young Philp was captured. He was traced to Aberdeen, then to Edinburgh, where he was taken, and I was requested by his people to investigate the matter. He emphatically protested his own innocence—not that there was any importance to be attached to that; and he accounted for his flight by saying he was half-mad with fear when he heard that the body had been found, for he felt sure he would be accused of the crime, and so in a thoughtless moment he fled, That was a very plausible story, but no one believed it.

Nor could they be expected to do so. Opinion, in fact. was dead set against him; and as in cases of this kind the vast majority of people never dream of bringing their reasoning powers to bear, Philp was condemned before he was tried. Every detail, every fact of the case really did seem to tell against him, so that the popular feeling was excusable. Nor was it to be wondered at that the people were incensed and irritated. Their district was a peaceful one. Scandal there was, and gossip, and backbiting, and envy, jealousy, and all uncharitableness; but then these are the common attributes of the human mind, and display themselves in every part of the world, but, of course, are more conspicuous in small communities. Murder or any other serious crime, however, was very rare indeed on Deeside; consequently so mysterious a crime as that of the Loch Davan murder was bound of necessity to cause a tremendous sensation, and the good folk could not be expected to hold their tongues on such an unusual occasion.

I found young Philp a very commonplace sort of person. His mind was a bucolic one pure and simple; and never having travelled, and with no education beyond such as a lad whose occupation in life was that of the plough and the pitchfork was likely to have, his ideas were cramped, and his views of the responsibilities of life narrowed to doing a certain amount of daily labour, and for the rest eating, drinking, sleeping, and enjoying himself. Of course, his notions of enjoyment were not characterized by any æsthetic tendency. Flirtations with the feminine members of his class, smoking, an occasional spree with certain boon companions, and a day's fishing or shooting now and again, might be said to represent his notions of what true

enjoyment meant. These, of course, were mere animal enjoyments, but he was utterly incapable of any mental ones.

Now, such a man might or might not be equal to a crime such as that he was now charged with. This expression, perhaps, is a little ambiguous. Therefore, let me explain. He would not commit so brutal a murder from any absolute natural depravity, because he was no worse and no better than tens of thousands of his kind, and if he was led into battering the life out of a fellow being, and that being his friend and companion from childhood, it would be either because some unusually irritating influence caused an accession of blind, brutal, unreasoning passion, or because cupidity was awakened by an irresistible desire to unlawfully possess himself of that which otherwise he could not acquire. I therefore endeavoured to make a study of him, with a view to determine in my own mind if he was likely to be the victim of the blind, unreasoning passion. The conclusion I drew was by no means of an affirmative character. An outbreak of ferocity would, in his case, be synonymous with an outbreak of madness, and there was no sign or trace of any kind that he was, or could have been, so afflicted. The impression he gave me was that he was of a peculiarly sympathetic and phlegmatic temperament, not likely to be aroused from its wonted placidity by any conceivable cause. He had no consciousness of having a nervous system in the psychological sense, but his animal functions were very active indeed. This view of mine was fully borne out by the character given to him throughout the district, even by those who were most prejudiced against him. On the other hand, I certainly did think that cupidity might make him its slave, though even

then I could not imagine a person with such a sheepish nature resorting to so desperate a means to gain what he coveted. Steal he might, but murder seemed to me an act he could not commit, no more than a sucking babe could lead an army into action; at any rate, not a murder such as that charged against him, and which could only have been perpetrated in a whirlwind of fury. I have already said that according to my analysis of him such fury was impossible in his case.

Let there be no mistake as to my meaning, which I wish to make very clear. I should have been a bold man, indeed, to have said at that early stage of the proceedings that young Philp did not commit the murder. Indeed, every detail and every circumstance clearly pointed to him as the culprit, and the evidence, as circumstantial evidence, was particularly strong. But then I dived deeper beneath the surface of external appearance than the general public. It was my business—a business I had qualified for by long training and experience—to be able to comprehend the subtleties of the human mind, and gather something of the motives of the human heart, nor was I likely to be influenced in any degree by the prevailing vulgar prejudice. To reason dispassionately was a duty with me, but it was also a quality inseparable from my nature. In this instance I was called upon, not to find out the strong links in the chain which others were endeavouring to coil round the young man, but to discover the weak ones. And admitting cupidity as the influence that might have led him to his fall, it was difficult to understand why, having so far committed himself as to kill his friend, he did not possess himself of the murdered man's watch and chain, ring, and money. That he failed to do this suggested itself to me as a flaw so

serious in the chain that it could never hold together. It is true Duff's remarkable and valuable scarf-pin was missing, and that was considered by most people as a sufficiently strong motive for the commission of the cruel crime. The pin was coveted, the man was murdered, and the pin was stolen, and the covetousness prompted the murder.

Well, that view certainly presented the case in a light which might be said to bring the crime home to the accused. But for my own part I thought that if Philp had done the deed for the mere sake of stealing the pin he must have been a consummate fool, and I could not think he was such a fool as that act would have stamped him as being. For, firstly, he could not possibly have worn the pin, as that would have led at once to his detection, and to attempt to dispose of it would have been no less dangerous, for an untravelled man of that kind had a very limited market at his command, and so unusual an article of adornment as the tiger's tooth, with its gold mounting and diamonds, was almost certain to arouse the suspicions of any one to whom it might have been offered. What, then, did Philp hope to do with it? Was he merely actuated by the wish to have it in his possession? If so, then the miser's instinct must have been very strong within him.

I did not ignore the fact that many reasons might have been adduced to justify the belief that he committed the crime simply for the sake of the pin. For instance, some people would have said—"Oh, no doubt his intention was to go out of the country, to go beyond the seas, and there sell the pin." Certainly such a thing came just within the bounds of possibility, but I could not conceive it probable. Philp knew nothing of the world from actual experience beyond his own limited

region, and he knew nothing of it by reading, for he was not a reader. It is true his friend Duff had travelled. His soldier life had taken him to foreign countries, and he may have told Philp such exciting stories of the wondrous sea, the brilliant tropics, and the glowing land of India as to fire him with a desire to know them for himself; but, then, in that case his mind must have been capable of being inflamed and excited, and my belief was that his want of imagination and generally phlegmatic disposition precluded the idea of his being worked upon in such a way.

I have dealt somewhat exhaustively with the psychological and logical aspects of this case, because it was altogether a remarkable one, and my interest in it was very great; therefore, I want to show how I brought my own judgment to bear, and exercised my own reasoning power, to determine the possibilities and probabilities of the accused man's guilt, and the reader who has followed me so far will have gathered that I considered the evidence against Philp, so far as its circumstantiality went, as being weak and lacking in that essential of completeness, without which it was inadmissible.

Leaving the theoretical and coming now to the practical part of my inquiry, which was directed to proving the young fellow innocent if he could be proved innocent, for it may be said that I held a brief for the defendant, I proceeded to the scene of the crime. Those who know the region of Loch Davan will know its picturesqueness and general wildness.

The spot where the murder was committed was a very lonely one. It was a wood on the upland that rises from the lake on the left, looking north. The body was found in a small thicket of undergrowth that filled

up a saucer-like hollow. The chances were that the dead man might have lain there undisturbed till the sound of the last trump, had the instinct of the shepherd's collie dog not led the animal to the spot. From the edge of the water to the unhallowed grave was nearly half a mile, and from this fact I inferred that the unfortunate man had been killed close to where he was found, for there were no distinguishable signs of the body having been dragged any distance, and none of a struggle having taken place. Philp's story was that his companion got tired of the fishing. It was rather slow work, it appears, for the weather was not favourable to the sport, and the finny denizens of the lake were unusually shy. Therefore Duff, having some knowledge of plants—which was true—expressed a desire to be landed in order that he might amuse himself by botanizing. Appearances certainly favoured the accuracy of the story, for the search for botanical specimens would lead the victim to the wood. Moreover, in his pocket a blank book was found, and between some of the leaves were specimens of ferns, lichens, and moss. Now, was it feasible that Philp could have placed the plants in the dead man's book in order to give colour to his story? Such a theory really seemed too improbable for any serious consideration, so I bestowed no attention upon it, but accepted the story of the botanizing as true. The next step was to determine the method of the murder. The injuries which had been inflicted were on the back of the head. There were none whatever in front. What was the deduction to be drawn from that? There was but one according to my way of thinking. It was this—Duff was absorbed in his occupation, and was probably stooping to pick up something or to examine a plant he had collected, when

the murderer creeping stealthily up delivered a swinging blow with a heavy stick, which caused Duff to pitch forward on to his face, and then he was beaten about the back part of the head until life was extinct. I had very particularly inquired the position in which the body lay when found, and I was assured that the face was uppermost. This tended as I believed to strengthen my theory; for after he had been killed he was turned on his back in order that the tiger-tooth pin might be drawn out of the cravat; and the possession of that pin was the sole aim and object of the slayer. Having possessed himself of it, he thought of nothing else, but at once made good his escape, after having cunningly heaped leaves over the dead man for his shroud.

From the examination of the scene of the crime, I went to the cottage of M'Tavish, which stood at the south end of the loch, and within fifty yards of the water. M'Tavish was a Highlander, well stricken in years, and a martyr to a painful form of rheumatism, which at times quite confined him to his bed. That was the case when the two young men went to hire his boat on the fatal day. Mrs. M'Tavish arranged the transaction, and by direction of her husband told the young men where they were likely to be most successful, and the spot to which she directed them was in a bee-line with the place where Duff's body was subsequently found.

Mrs. M'Tavish was a woman of sixty or so, and she and her husband had lived in the neighbourhood the greater part of their lives. He had originally been a gamekeeper in the service of the Duke of ——, but his rheumatic complaint had compelled him to abandon that calling, and his Grace gave him money to purchase the boat, and he had permission to fish the loch, and he

made a little money occasionally by letting his boat out, as in the case of Duff and Philp.

This old couple had had three children. Two had died in youth, and the third, who was a congenital imbecile, grew up, and at this period he was about thirty. During my interview with his mother and father he was present. He sat on a chair and swayed his body to and fro in a meaningless yet rhythmical way. His face was wizened and pinched up. It was the face of an animal—not a man. I don't know that I ever saw a human face that resembled an animal's so much. The eyes were full of a deadly cunning; the general expression was that of a hyena. As I talked to his parents he seemed to take no notice of us, but every now and then he broke out into a wild, fierce laugh, a sort of eldritch screech in fact, that was peculiarly eerie.

I questioned Mrs. M'Tavish very closely as to whether she had noticed any signs of excitement in Philp on the day of the murder when he brought the boat back. But she was emphatic in her assertion that he was perfectly calm, and betrayed not the slightest symptom of being flurried. "In fact, he was as cool and collected as ever a man could be," she said, "and seemed much puzzled at his friend's absence."

At this moment Dugal M'Tavish, the idiot, broke into his eerie screech again, and sent a thrill through me. I turned quickly and looked at him. He was still swaying from side to side, but on his face was such a look of devilish malignity, and from his eyes there gleamed such a strange light of ferocity, that I positively shrank from him, and suddenly there leapt into my brain the question—

"Is it possible this idiot is the murderer?"

That question begot a lightning-like train of cogitations. The murder for the sake of the pin was such a one as an idiot might commit. The cunning with which it had been carried out was suggestive of the cunning of some human animal. This pitiable specimen of a man was extremely likely to have been attracted by the sight of the bauble, and the innate cunning of his shattered brain suggested to him to kill the owner in order that he might obtain possession of the pin. The pin being the only thing stolen, and the watch and chain, money, and ring being left, was consonant with imbecility. The brutal ferocity with which the murdered man's head had been battered suggested the act of an unreasoning savage.

These thoughts flashed through my mind, and, turning to the woman, I said—

"Come here, Mrs. M'Tavish. I wish to speak to you."

She followed me to the other room. Then, looking at her straight, I asked, "Was your son Dugal out on the day this crime was committed?"

She did not seem to notice the point of my question, and answered frankly—

"Yes, I think he was. He went out to fetch down some sheep from the hillside for a neighbour."

I happened at this moment to turn towards the communicating door of the two rooms. It was ajar, and the space framed a hideous and revolting face. It was the face of Dugal. He had risen from the chair, and was watching me. As soon as he saw he was observed he withdrew, and once again the roof rang with the eldritch scream. I felt then that I had at last discovered the murderer of young Duff. Once more addressing the woman, I asked, "Is your son dangerous at any time?"

"Oh, no. He's perfectly harmless, puir body, and wouldn't hurt a fly."

"You've never had to confine him?"

"Lor' bless you, man, no! He's been like that ever since he was born. I used to pray when he was a wee lad that the Lord would take him, but it wasn't to be, and so we've done our best for him. He's a sore trial, and his affliction's very painful to us, but we bear our sorrow with resignation, for it's the Lord's will. But, puir thing, puir thing, he's just as harmless as a lamb."

I thought to myself that only a mother could have seen his lamb-like qualities, and I was sure that if the imbecile had been living anywhere near a town he would have been confined in an asylum as a dangerous lunatic.

In a little while I left the cottage, but returned shortly after in company with two gamekeepers from the neighbourhood, who, as they informed me in the course of a conversation, by no means shared the mother's opinion as to the lamb-like virtues of Dugal. They considered that he ought to have been placed under restraint long ago.

Assisted by the two men, I proceeded to thoroughly search the cottage, to the evident surprise of Mrs. M'Tavish and the obvious distress of her invalid husband, while her imbecile son seemed to regard our movements with utter indifference. My search was directed towards finding the stolen pin, if it were there. In that I was not successful, but I found a shepherd's crook, the iron of which was bent. I was induced to examine this crook critically, and I found what I was convinced were blood-stains on it. So I had it wrapped up and conveyed it carefully myself to Aberdeen, where

it was microscopically examined by the professor of chemistry in the University. He pronounced the stains as blood, beyond all doubt, but whether human or animal he would not say. But what was of greater importance, several hairs were discovered adhering to the iron ring where the hook joined on to the wooden staff. These hairs were unquestionably human, and were identical with Duff's hairs. This staff, then, was the blunt instrument that had been used to beat the victim to death, and the hands that had wielded it with such brutal force were the hands of the imbecile Dugal M'Tavish. At any rate, in view of my discovery, it was felt that no evidence would lie against Philp, and after due inquiry he was released, but M'Tavish was ordered to be taken to a lunatic asylum.

Of course, to many people this was an unsatisfactory termination of the case. They considered that Philp's innocence had not been sufficiently clearly established, and though they were afraid to openly say they believed him guilty, there is no doubt they thought it. About three years later old M'Tavish died, and his wife, having no means of subsistence, and being very frail, had to go to the workhouse in Aberdeen. Then the owner of the cottage in which they had lived so long proceeded to pull it down, as he had no further use for it. In the course of the demolition the workmen found under the boards of one of the rooms the missing tiger-tooth pin. The diamonds were wanting. They had evidently been picked out. Who could have concealed the pin where it was found if not the idiot Dugal? And if he did not commit the murder, then no murder was committed. But the fact is, that pin had inflamed his mind. Very likely he saw Duff land from the boat, and followed him, or he may have met him in the wood.

But whichever way it was, no one with a spark of intelligence could dream that it was Dugal M'Tavish, who slew the young soldier, whose life was sacrificed for the sake of the bauble he had preserved of his prowess in India when he encountered the tiger.

MOTHER JUBAL'S TRUMP-CARD.

ONE of the most remarkable of the psychological aspects of—if I may so express it—the born criminal is the persistency with which he will defy and break the law. Although, as a rule, the habitual criminal is a craven who dreads anything that affords him discomfort or produces physical hurt, he will, nevertheless, risk and incur the severest punishment rather than forego indulgence in his peculiar tastes. Crime is to him as much a necessity as strong drink is to the dipsomaniac. This may be said to raise the question as to the moral responsibility of habitual criminals. It is argued, and to some extent rightly so, that the criminal who takes to crime as a duck takes to water is as much a victim of hereditary transmission as is the victim of scrofula, phthisis, cancer, and other forms of disease. On the other hand, some people maintain that early moral training will entirely stamp out the criminal instinct. Unhappily statistics and experience show that this is not to be depended upon. Of course, moral training must always have a tendency to develop the higher qualities of the mind, and beget a better understanding of the responsibilities of life, of the duty one man owes to another as members of the great human family, and a more respectful regard for the laws laid down by communities of people for their own safe-guarding, and the protection of their interests in their dealings one with another. But this argues prepossession of a certain receptivity on the part of the person brought under the

influence of good training, for, in the absence of the receptive faculty, all attempts to teach are useless—as useless as trying to grow grapes from thistles. I am aware that this doctrine raises a very nice point which might prove the text for exhaustless argument, for it will be said that if the human mind is capable of receiving bad impressions, it may be equally influenced by good ones; but I am disposed to take exception to that, and to assert that in the same brain the power of acquiring evil knowledge may be very strong, while that for good is very weak, or may not exist at all. Then comes the question, If that is so, ought not the naturally depraved to be treated as beings affected with infectious and incurable disease?

I use the word "infectious" in this connection with a full understanding of its import, for can any one acquainted with criminal life doubt that crime is infectious, and that one criminal may make many more? This induces the somewhat curious speculation as to whether or not we should stamp crime out if, assuming it to be possible, we killed off every known criminal and the offspring of every such criminal. The student of human nature will answer in the negative, and I agree with him, for unhappily the doctrine of original sin militates against any other answer, and then all experience teaches us that the human heart is innately wicked. Where the senses are refined, the moral perception strong, this innate wickedness may be kept in permanent subjection; but in the character of every man, though he approximates to a saint, there is some flaw, and perfection—strive we never so well—cannot be attained. All we can hope for is that by a constant striving to avoid the evil of this transitory state we may qualify ourselves for that perfection which is to be

required when we pass from this sublunary sphere to the sources of light and truth.

A human being who has become hardened in crime, and is undeterred by the dread of punishment, ought never to be regarded in any other way than as a vicious animal. Indeed, he is an animal in the worse sense, and his constant war with society and his ceaseless opposition to the forms of law and order beget in him a dangerous cunning, a cunning rendered all the more dangerous because it is controlled by a higher form of reasoning power than that which appertains, for instance, to the fox, which is generally supposed, though erroneously, to represent the most acute phase of cunning to be found in the lower animal kingdom. Such a being, therefore, is a pest, a danger, and in dealing with him all sentiment of whatsoever kind should be eliminated from our consideration. The human animal who wilfully destroys a fellow-being's life should be hanged without compunction, and the tears of compassion should be reserved for the victim, and not shed for the murderer, as there is a tendency to do in this morbidly sentimental age; while he who filches his neighbour's property, who robs the orphan and the widow, who cheats the confiding and weak, should be dealt with according to the measure of his guilt, but always severely, for it has been proved beyond doubt that leniency towards crime is a fatal error. As the habitual drunkard can only be cured by drastic measures, so the habitual criminal can only be kept in check by a full straining of the powers of the law. Once let a criminal conceive the notion that the law is ineffectual, or weak, or disposed to be grandmotherly, and he will take advantage of it, impelled by the belief that he has more to gain than to lose. We who have

to deal with wrong-doers know that they are in a certain way given to estimating chances for and against. If any one who breaks the law was perfectly sure he was going to be found out, is it likely he would jeopardize himself? But he knows that, while there may be many risks, there are a good many chances in his favour, and that is how the higher form of cunning is developed. He tries to circumvent the Argus-headed justice, with its thousand and one eyes, and very frequently he succeeds. His cultivated cunning defeats the intelligence of justice. The consideration of the various points I have advanced is so deeply interesting that I am tempted to pursue the argument, but space forbids. I am going to give force to my remarks, however, by telling the story of the life and death of a very remarkable person—a woman named Jubal Lee, but who in her later years came to be familiarly known as "Mother Jubal." Why the name of Jubal was bestowed upon her it is difficult to say, unless it was a mere freak on the part of her parents. Jubal was born in a Glasgow poorhouse. Her mother was one of those wretched beings who tramp the country in the greatest wretchedness, living heaven alone knows how or why. Her record was by no means good. Her father subsequently committed suicide to avoid being captured and compelled to answer for the death of an unfortunate whom he had grossly and cruelly assaulted. Her mother was an habitual drunkard, and in the end died in a pauper lunatic asylum.

It is not necessary to go back further into the genealogical history of the family, but if one did, proof would, no doubt, be forthcoming that Jubal Lee was the offspring of a deeply impregnated criminal stock.

Jubal was born in the winter time. Her father at

the time of her birth was serving a period of imprisonment for highway robbery, and her mother had been tramping the country for months, and was in a deplorable state of misery, so she sought shelter in the poorhouse pending her confinement, and one dark, dismal December day her tainted offspring was ushered into the world. It is on record that from that time forward, for sixteen years about, the child and her mother were frequently inmates of the house. What became of the father during this period is not known. He had taken himself off, and was not heard of until the assault case mentioned above. Then, when he found the hue and cry growing too hot, he ended his useless life. Her mother died suddenly in the asylum. She had long been ailing, and though far from an old woman was worn out. One night the rickety machinery stopped suddenly, and Jubal's mother ceased her wanderings for ever. She was buried in a pauper's grave. Not a tear was shed, not a sigh heaved, not even by her daughter, Jubal, who cared nothing for her mother, nor for any other being in the wide world. She was considered to be a thoroughly depraved and heartless girl, with a very large element of the serpent in her. Nevertheless, some attempts were made at this time to reform her, and impart some book knowledge to her, but Jubal would have none of it. She held her own ideas as to how she would lead her life, and she was not going to be guided by any one else.

It is not conceivable, having regard to the wretched stock from which she sprang, that she could have any beauty of either mind or body. Nor had she. Mentally she was warped; physically she had no more attractiveness for the ordinary eye than a toad. But she was a

factor in the great human sum, and had to be reckoned with, and she was destined to cause a good deal of trouble before she departed for that bourne whence no traveller returns.

Jubal showed a fine partiality for her native town. She had been born in Glasgow, and she stuck to Glasgow. No doubt Glasgow would rather have foregone the honour of owning her, but it could not help itself. For the first ten years following on her mother's death this interesting young woman figured in the police reports almost as often as Sunday figures in the calendar. Her offences were chiefly drunkenness and petty larceny. She consorted with thieves and the worst of characters, and though she was lacking in intelligence in the higher sense, she was conspicuqus for an intelligent cunning which often enabled her to outwit those who were opposed to her.

A city missionary once took her in hand. He flattered himself he could make something of her, and he resolved to try. She was not thirty at the time, and he did not regard her, as many did, as a hopeless case. She affected to listen with interest to his eloquent appeals, and while doing so she in turn appealed to the generosity of himself and certain philanthropic ladies with whom he placed her in touch, and so successful was she that she obtained money to a considerable amount, and clothes that might have lasted her for years. At last she was exhibited as a splendid example of a true convert, and as a brand plucked from the burning. She was pointed to as a refutation of the sneers about tea-fighting ladies being lacking in philanthropy and city missionaries in enterprise. The big drum was beaten loudly, and the public were asked to walk up and view this reclaimed savage. There was no decep-

tion, ladies and gentlemen. It was the genuine article. The baser metal had been converted into pure gold. The "dear sister" of the gutter had been brought into the fold, and there was joy amongst the angels. Jubal must have had a good time of it while it lasted. Sometimes, possibly, she may have felt tempted to fly at the throats of the grandly-dressed dames who came to view her through their gold-rimmed spectacles when she appeared at some tea fight or missionary meeting, but who, figuratively speaking, gathered their skirts about them and kept at a distance, lest there should be one spot about her that had escaped the moral scouring, and which might be sufficient to contaminate them. But Jubal knew her book, according to vulgar phrasing. She saw her chance, and she proved that she wasn't quite the fool she was deemed to be. She managed to exact, one way and another, from the pockets of those who were trying so hard to scour her, a sum exceeding one hundred and twenty pounds. She played upon one lady's feelings so well and cleverly that she was the richer for it by a goodly number of pound notes, besides many unconsidered trifles in the shape of clothes. But all things come to an end. Jubal had been a nine days' wonder, but the novelty was wearing off. The goody-goods who tried to win their way to heaven by an outward and ostentatious display of charity wanted a new excitement. They could not always be singing the praises of one convert. The most beautiful thing may pall in time. Our senses may grow weary even of the scent of orange blossom, and our palate become satiated with ambrosial nectar. So it was in Jubal's case. However interesting she was at first, the interest wore off. She saw that, and, metaphorically, extending her fingers and putting her thumb to her nose, she gathered

up her spoil, went back to the gutter, and the angels ceased to rejoice.

How Jubal must have grinned as she counted her gains. A free gift is no robbery, and as what she had got had been given to her, she had not been guilty of stealing, however much she might have bamboozled the givers. No doubt after this she was regarded as such perfectly hopeless soil that no good fruit could possibly grow upon it, for no more missionaries or philanthropic ladies troubled themselves about her.

With the money that Jubal had thus acquired by her clever performance in the laughable farce of "The City Missionary and the Reclaimed Sinner," she set up in business as a rag and bone merchant. Those who knew her best—namely, the police—were probably not deceived by this new departure, which was regarded as a move to enable her to trade and traffic in property whose rightful owners had been unlawfully deprived of it. However, until that was proved against her the law could not interfere.

At this period there was a large patch of vacant land abutting on Duke Street. It was a howling waste, the receptacle for all sorts of rubbish, the happy hunting ground of the unwashed urchins of the district during the day, and the resort of human birds of prey at night. Sometimes these monsters swooped down on unsuspecting passers-by—for the wilderness was bounded by a half-formed street on each side—and having stripped them of their valuables, plunged again into the darkness of the waste. Occasionally it happened that some alcoholized idiot having the key of the street sought the waste in order to sleep off the effects of his debauch, and so sure as he went there, so sure was it that everything about him of the slightest value would be filched. It

is recorded that once or twice the inebriate on waking found himself with not an atom more covering him than he had when he first entered the world.

The Duke Street boundary line of this Alsatian Sahara was a row of four small houses. They were one-story houses, and the one at the end nearest the city was fitted as a shop. Formerly it had been occupied by a barber, but he had permanently given up shaving, having been gathered to his fathers. The shop and house remained empty for a long time, and at last Jubal took possession of it. For years the houses had been in a dilapidated and tumble-down condition. There had been lawsuit after lawsuit about them owing to disputed ownership. And as the legal vampires sucked the orange dry, the peel withered; that is, the houses fell into ruin. At last the Courts decided on the ownership. It was proved that the rightful heir was a poor woman, far advanced in years, who gained a miserable living by hawking. She had no means of her own, and could not afford to lay out one penny piece to put her property in an habitable state of repair. She knew Jubal, and with an eye to the main chance, which evidences her superior cunning, Jubal made an offer to the old woman, which the old woman accepted, and Jubal actually became a property owner. At least, so the tradition runs, and it is something more than a tradition, for it is certain that she entered into possession; she opened the shop as a rag and bone shop, and she let the other houses as lodgings to most questionable characters. She thus became a public nuisance, but the broom of municipal improvement was not yet strong enough to sweep her and her property into the dust-bin of oblivion. It was soon after Mother Jubal was installed as a property owner that I made her acquaintance. The prefix

of "Mother" had not then been added to her peculiar name. Lee was her surname, but she had never been called by it. It was always Jubal. It was uncommon; it was striking; it took people's fancy, and so she was distinguished as Jubal by the fraternity of which she was so conspicuous a member, and by-and-bye they bestowed upon her as a title of honour (from their point of view) or regard the prefix of "Mother," and far and wide she came to be known and referred to as "Mother Jubal."

Let me describe her as I first knew her. She was probably little short of forty, but looked much older. Her hair was iron grey, the skin of her face exceedingly like a piece of old and mildewed parchment. She was a little woman, with an angular, bony figure, upon which her clothes hung as they might have hung on a broom handle. The general expression of her features was the very concentrated essence of cunning and deceit. I don't think any one having the slightest claim to be considered a judge of character could have looked into that hard, cunning face and have said that Jubal was capable of respecting the truth, or of doing a good deed, it so clearly indicated ingrained villainy; while underlying all was a suggestion of latent ferocity. It was a face that repelled, that was calculated to beget a shudder in any one of a different feather to herself. It made the thinker sad to contemplate that by a long process of sin the human countenance can be stamped so prominently with the signs of some of the worst passions of which our common nature is capable.

I had been commissioned to keep an eye on Jubal, as there is little doubt she was trading in stolen goods. But there wasn't a dodge she wasn't up to, and so craftily did she work that it was difficult to get such

legal evidence as would warrant an arrest and lead to a conviction. The class of wretches she had dealings with would not betray her, for she was of great use to them, and amongst criminals and evil-doers there is a rigid freemasonry; and in such a case as Mother Jubal's it was by no means easy to get the necessary legal proof. Of course the creature knew this. She knew she was being watched, and she was as wary as a tigress which scents danger to her cubs.

One day a notorious rascal was wanted. He had long defied capture. I got on his trail, ran him down, and found him lying *perdu* in Mother Jubal's premises. I unearthed him, of course; brought him before the beaks, and had the satisfaction ultimately of hearing him sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

Of course there might have been a chance at this time of bringing Jubal to book on the grounds of having harboured a known criminal. But difficulties lay in the way here, and it was deemed advisable to let her stew in her own gravy a little longer. After this she became an intolerable nuisance. The sanitary authorities of those days were not noted either for their energy or the strict enforcement of the regulations framed for the benefit of the city generally. But Mother Jubal roused them to a sense of the duty they owed the public. She had allowed her property to get into such a vile condition that she was summoned, and compelled, after many fines had been inflicted, to show a little regard for public decency and health.

For me personally she entertained a bitter and fierce enmity, and this enmity was increased in virulence when I suddenly presented myself at her place one day, and told her I had come to make a search of her premises, as I had reason to suppose she was in posses-

sion of some stolen goods. Never shall I forget the remarkable picture she presented when I made known my business. The shop was small and lumbered up with a collection of horrible rubbish. There were rags and clothes so ancient that they seemed in the last stage of rottenness, and piles of bones that exhaled a nauseating and pestiferous effluvium. There were hundreds of dirty bottles, heaps of metal scraps, pieces of lead and iron piping, and two or three tubs containing putrid grease, the refuse and scrapings of kitchens, and which helped to still further poison the air of the den.

Between me and the owner of this repository of horrors was a small broken-down counter. She was grimy and foul herself, as foul as the things around her, and when she learned my errand her ferocity displayed itself in a remarkable way. She seemed to possess all the savageness of the wild feline tribe. She rested her bony hands on the counter—and they were singularly suggestive of claws. She craned her long, scraggy neck as she leaned towards me, and snarled fiercely, showing her broken and blackened teeth.

"Yah!" she hissed, "you want to search my place, do you. Well, you can do it, but devil a thing will you find that don't belong to me. Whoo! I wish I could spit poison. I would blind you, I would. You and the likes of you is a curse to us poor folk."

"Don't excite yourself, Jubal," I remarked, with a laugh, "or you may be ill."

"Bah! go to Jericho," she exclaimed. "Jericho" was not the word she used.

"You see, Jubal," I continued, "if you would lead a decent and respectable life you wouldn't be troubled with the law's representatives."

"I am as decent and respectable as you are," she screamed almost at the top of her voice.

"From your point of view possibly," I remarked, "but then we don't all see alike."

I proceeded to carry out my duty, and during the whole of the time she snarled, hissed, and uttered curses upon me, and when I was compelled to confess that I had failed to discover anything that would render her liable to answer to the law, she executed a *pas seul* of perfectly fiendish delight, and flourishing her skinny arms about my head in a menacing way, she yelled out—

"Yah, curse you! I've done you this time, and I'll do you again."

"Perhaps, and perhaps *not*," I said sententiously, and laying a strong emphasis on the "not."

"S—s—s—sish!" she hissed, like an angry rattle-snake; "you are not clever enough to trap me any way. I've done you before, and I'll do you again, I say."

She had allowed her feelings to run away with her discretion, but I did not think it worth while to prolong the argument, so, advising her to keep out of danger, I took my departure, with her rusty, raucous voice ringing in my ears as she breathlessly poured forth a volley of abuse on my devoted head.

Soon after this I left Glasgow and went abroad. I was absent for nearly five years, and then returned. I had almost forgotten all about Mother Jubal, but I soon heard that during those five years she had given no end of trouble, and had been convicted over and over again of petty offences. Her property still stood. It was found most difficult to shift her. A good deal more than the value had been offered, but she refused it. Of course it was bound in time to be swept away, but it

was a question of time. Improvements were being effected all round. The waste had been cleared and houses erected on portions of it, and the ramshackle hovels of Mother Jubal could not be allowed much longer to offend the public taste in such a way. Already legal steps were being taken to compel her either to sell or rebuild, but, as every one knows, the law very jealously guards vested rights and interests, even of such an abandoned creature as Mother Jubal, and therefore there were technical difficulties to contend against, which were at once irritating and annoying. Moreover, she had got hold of a disreputable and unprincipled solicitor, who eked out a living by defending evil-doers in the police-courts, and he was generally known as "the criminal's lawyer." He was dangerous and a nuisance, because he was well acquainted with all the forms of law, and as he had nothing to lose, but everything to gain, in Mother Jubal's case, he was resolved to make a hard fight. However, I was destined to hasten the end in a way that no one could have anticipated.

A burglary of a very daring character was committed at the house of a well-known Glasgow tradesman, who resided with his family near Helensburgh. He was a wealthy man, and lived in good style. The robbery took place on a Sunday evening while the family were at church. The thieves took a ladder from a house in the course of erection not far off, and by means of this ladder they got in through a bath-room window which had been left open. They then proceeded to ransack the place for valuables, and carried off everything worth carrying off in the shape of plate and jewellery. The owner of the house being a great yachtsman, he had won many prizes in the shape of cups, vases, &c., and

as these were all of solid silver, it is needless to say the gentlemen of the night appropriated them. The booty which the rascals secured was valued at several hundred pounds, so that the enterprising burglars made a good haul, and, what is more, they got clear off with the property.

The case was placed in my hands on Monday, and I was asked to use the most energetic measures to capture the thieves and recover the stolen cups, if it were possible to do so, for the owner set great store on these trophies, and nothing could compensate him for their loss. Several days passed, however, without any arrest being made; but during this time I kept a sharp eye on Mother Jubal's premises, for somehow I got it into my head that she might be used as a medium for the disposal of the property. It was about a week after the robbery, that pretty late one night I saw a fellow leave her house who was very well known to the police. It was close on midnight, and I had been watching the place for nearly three hours; for though the shop was shut up a light was still burning, and this with one or two other trifling signs aroused my suspicions. At last the door opened very cautiously; Mother Jubal herself appeared, glanced up and down the street to assure herself that there were no confounded police or detectives about, and then, withdrawing, a man came forth and walked rapidly away. I followed, and was enabled to identify him without his being aware that any one was on his track. He proved to be a desperate ruffian, whose name was John Lamont, but who was familiarly known as "Blueskin." He had been several times convicted, and was regarded as "an incorrigible." As soon as I saw him come out of Jubal's place I felt that my suspicions were justified, and I determined to increase my vigilance.

On the following evening he went again to Mother Jubal's and remained for some considerable time. I knew that he was lodging at a low house near Stobscross, and I made up my mind to search this place for evidence of robbery. My search was so far successful that I found some broken silver spoons, which, from the description I had, I identified as part of the property stolen, so my next step was to arrest "Blueskin." In the meantime, however, he must in some way or other have got wind that he was being watched, for when wanted he was nowhere to be found. He had made good his escape so far, but I was satisfied in my own mind it was only temporary, and that he would soon be captured, for he had once been a soldier, and he bore a great scare on his face, the result of a terrible wound he had received. This scar made him very conspicuous, and by means of it he had been arrested on previous occasions.

I now proceeded to Mother Jubal's place, feeling sure that at last I should be able to bring her to book, and clear the city of one at least of its troublesome characters. When I arrived there I found the shop closed, and I got no response to my repeated knocking, though I knew Jubal was inside, as I had heard her moving about. I had a colleague with me, and I sent him for further assistance, as I made up my mind to break into the shop rather than be defeated.

My companion soon returned with two other men, and we held a consultation. Then once again I hammered at the door and called on Mother Jubal in the name of tha law to give me admission, but at first this produced no effect, and I sent for a crowbar in order to effect an entrance. Jubal must have recognized now that resistance would be useless, for she opened

the upper window, leaned out, and with the remarkable snarl which so strongly resembled the snarl of some savage animal, she demanded to know my business.

"I want entrance into your premises, Jubal," I answered.

"What for?"

"To search them, as I have reason to think you are concealing some stolen property."

"Go to kingdom come!" she shrieked, only she substituted a place for "kingdom come." "What do you come here disturbing me for? I am ill, and was in bed when you knocked. Go to kingdom come, I say! I've got no stolen goods here."

"Well, if you have not, you've nothing to fear," said I; "but, any way, I'm going to satisfy myself, so open the door."

"I sha'n't," was her polite answer.

"Then I shall have to use this key to effect an entrance," I said, as I held up the crowbar.

"I tell you I've got nothing," she howled hoarsely.

"Then why don't you let me in?"

"You are not coming in. This is my own place, and you have no business here."

"I have business."

"You are a liar!"

"For the last time, in the name of the law I command you to give me admission," I said sternly. Then a little more persuasively I added, "Now, look here, Jubal, don't be a fool. The law is too strong for you; you cannot defy it, for it will conquer in the end. If, as you say, you have no stolen goods concealed in your place, why object to my satisfying myself?"

"I tell you," she screamed again, "you are not coming in here."

"And I say I am."

Here she leaned half-way out of the window. The daylight had almost faded, but there was enough to enable me to see that her ugly face wore a look of absolutely devilish hatred. I don't know that I ever before saw such an inhuman gleam shoot from human eyes. It almost seemed as if she had become transfigured, and now represented some cruel demon who had taken on human shape, and the passion that shook her and the hatred that filled her made themselves manifest in her thick, gutteral voice.

"Look here," she hissed between her set teeth, "I've got to clear off a reckoning with you, and, by God, I'll do it if you don't go away and leave me alone!"

"I've argued with you long enough," I answered sharply. "I have a duty to do, and I am going to do it." Here I ordered one of my men to ply the crowbar.

"Stay!" she yelled in that same raucous tone. "I give you warning that if you come into my place you come at your peril."

"Oh, I'll take all the risk," I answered.

"You are a fool," she replied. "You think you are going to win, do you?"

"Well, I venture to think it won't be long before I've caged you," I said.

She broke out into a laugh that absolutely made me shudder. It really wasn't like the laugh of a human creature at all, but it reminded me of the half laugh, half howl of the Indian jackal or the African hyena. Any one who has ever heard either of these fierce

animals, as they scent their prey in the night, will understand what I mean when I say that Mother Jubal's laugh almost made me shudder. It was horrible and blood-curdling. A crowd had collected, and I heard more than one person say, "Why, she's mad."

"Look here, you devil!" she screamed, addressing herself to me. "You think the game's yours, do you? Well, go ahead, but I've got a trump card that will astonish you."

She withdrew, and banged the window down, and undeterred by her menace and covert threat, I ordered the door to be broken open. A few vigorous blows of the crowbar soon told. The woodwork was shattered; the lock yielded, and the door flew open. The shop was in darkness, and all was silent. I certainly did think it was rather ominous that Mother Jubal should be so quiet, and, suspecting mischief, I told my men to be cautious. We paused outside for some moments to light a couple of lanterns we had with us, and to that pause no doubt we owed our lives. What followed it is almost difficult to describe, but I will endeavour to convey some impression of my own experience and sensations. I suddenly seemed to be lifted off my feet and hurled through the air. A hot blast swept over my face, and an awful flash of fire blinded me. In my ears sounded a confused roar, something like the roar of an angry sea lashing a rock-bound coast, and heard from a distance. I thought that the heavens had burst, that the stars were falling, and the end of all things had come. Then a dreaminess stole upon me, and I remembered nothing more.

When I recovered consciousness—for I had become unconscious—I was in bed, with bandages about my head. I had been injured, though not severely, and I

was told that in a few days' time I should be able to get up. My anxiety to know what had happened was, as may be imagined, very great. But the news was withheld from me for a while, as I was suffering from shock to the nervous system, and it was deemed advisable that I should be kept quiet. On the following day, however, a paper was brought to me, and in it I read how Mother Jubal had played her trump card. Being driven to bay, she had fired a keg of gunpowder. At least it was supposed to be a keg; but how she fired it, and what quantity of powder was there, would never be known. She involved her own place in absolute ruin, and the adjoining premises were shattered almost to pieces. I myself had been blown right across the road, and unhappily one of my companions was killed outright, while some of the bystanders were more or less injured, one boy seriously so, owing to a large stone falling on his head. Had the explosion been delayed a few minutes I and my assistants would have been inside the shop, and could not possibly have escaped death. The poor fellow who lost his life must have been in the direct line of the explosion, and received the full shock of it. And touching Mother Jubal herself, what had become of her? Well, she had so effectually played her last card, that very little of her was left. Later, when the ruins came to be searched, charred and blackened pieces of human remains were found. These were collected together; identification was impossible; but could any one doubt that the desperate and ferocious Mother Jubal had blown herself into eternity? It was an awful end to an awful life, but Jubal is a painfully interesting psychological study. She presents us with a phase of human nature which unhappily is not as rare as one might be disposed to

think. She was a moral monstrosity, and one may rightly speculate as to what extent she was a responsible being. Her death was certainly a gain to the community at large, and she saved the authorities a lot of trouble. Her physical fragments were placed in a box and buried in a dishonoured grave, and it may safely be said that no living soul mourned her loss. A very careful examination of the *débris* that made up the ruins of her house brought to light a quantity of the property that had been stolen from Helensburgh. Subsequently "Blueskin" was arrested, together with several other men, against whom the robbery was clearly proved, and they all received long sentences of imprisonment. Mother Jubal's trump card, therefore, did not deter the law nor save the sinners. But it caused her to cease from troubling any more, and it very effectually and expeditiously settled a good many legal difficulties that had cropped up with reference to her property. He trump card, therefore, gave her opponents the game.

THE STORY OF A BRACELET.

ONE morning a lady, handsomely dressed, entered the shop of Mr. Frank Henderson, a well-known Glasgow jeweller, and inquired if she could have a bracelet made from a special design, as she wanted it for a birthday present for a niece. She was asked if she had the design with her, whereupon she produced a somewhat elaborate drawing of what she said she required. It was altogether an original design, and the jeweller was much struck with it. The setting of the bracelet was to be of the finest gold, and the stones were to be diamonds, rubies, and pearls. After carefully examining the design, the jeweller said he had no doubt he could make such an ornament, but as to the cost he would have to go into figures about that and send her an estimate in the course of a day or two. That seemed satisfactory to the lady, and she gave her name and address as—

MRS. MAUDE JOHNSON VERE,
27, Park Quadrant,
West End Park.

As soon as she had taken her departure the jeweller, as an ordinary business precaution, turned up the directory and searched for Mrs. Maude Johnson Vere's name, but did not find it, neither at the address she had given nor elsewhere. That was evidence at least that the lady did not reside permanently in Glasgow. However, as the order had not yet been given, and it was

time enough to take precautions when it was, he proceeded to work out the estimate.

Mr. Henderson had gained a reputation for specialities in the way of jewellery, especially bracelets and brooches, which he mostly designed himself, and he made a boast in his advertisements that all his goods were manufactured on the premises, and that consequently he was enabled to compare very favourably with London prices, while the workmanship was quite equal to anything produced in London. In consequence of these statements, he had got together quite a large connection, and he was entrusted with orders on all sorts of occasions. There was nothing, therefore, out of the way in a lady requesting to have a special bracelet made. But when he came to work out the estimate he found that the article could not be produced in the style she wanted it, and with the number of stones in it that she had enumerated, for a less sum than fourteen hundred pounds. As he thought probably she would consider that too high, he addressed the following note to her:—

"Estimate for Bracelet.

"Dear Madam,—I find that to produce an article identical with the design you have been good enough to submit, and of the quality you expressed a desire to have, would cost fourteen hundred pounds. As presumably you did not contemplate going to such an expense, I will suggest that you will allow me the pleasure of designing something for you. For two or three hundred pounds I can give you an article which, I am sure, will be satisfactory in every way. Waiting your further commands, I am madam, your obedient servant,

"Frank Henderson."

The next day the tradesman received the following indignant reply from the lady :—

"SIR,—I did not make any inquiries from you as to what you would produce a design of your own for. Moreover, you had no right to assume that I should consider fourteen hundred pounds too high, as I am not aware that I said one word that would have led you to suppose I was anxious to limit the price. What I asked you for was an estimate for my design, carried out exactly in accordance with my instructions. I gather now from your letter that you can produce such an article as I require for the sum of one thousand four hundred pounds. I will accept that estimate subject to the gold and jewels used being the very best of their kind. The bracelet is required for a present for a favourite niece of mine, who attains her twenty-first birthday in two months' time, when she becomes possessed of a large fortune. If, therefore, you are willing to accept my order, you must contract to have the bracelet completed and delivered in six weeks from date. Let me know at once if this meets your views.—Yours truly,

"(MRS.) MAUDE JOHNSON VERE."

On receipt of this note Mr. Henderson deemed it advisable to make some inquiries about the lady before deciding to accept her order; though, as a preliminary, he sent her a reply saying he was quite prepared to execute her commission, and asking if she would pay cash in advance, as in that case he would allow her a discount of ten per cent. To this she returned an answer that she was not going to pay for a thing she had not seen, though he could have a deposit if he wanted it.

The tradesman's next step was to send a confidential clerk to the lady's address to make some inquiries, and he was informed that she was believed to be highly respectable, and a lady of position and good connections. She had lived there for some months, and received a good many people, all of whom appeared to be well to do.

So far, then, this was satisfactory, and the jeweller advanced another step by writing again to the lady to say he would be happy to place her order in hand at once, and he requested the favour of a cheque on account for two hundred pounds.

To this she sent a cheque on the Bank of Scotland for one hundred, and told him that he could have the balance immediately on completion of the order.

So far, then, the matter seemed satisfactory. The tradesman had a hundred to the good so far, and he was not likely to part with the bracelet until he had received the remainder. So he at once put the work in hand, for the time allowed for its completion was short enough, as the setting required very delicate and careful workmanship.

In due course the bracelet was finished. It was ready, in fact, four days before the time stipulated, and Mrs. Vere was notified by letter that the article was ready and subject to her orders. Whereupon she wrote to say that unfortunately she was confined to the house with a bad cold, and could not go out; but if Mr. Henderson would be good enough to send the bracelet the following day for inspection, if it was satisfactory, a cheque would be handed to him at once. All this, of course, seemed perfectly *bonâ fide;* but Henderson resolved to go to the house himself with the bracelet, and in accordance with this resolve he arrived there at

half-past three, the time named in the letter. He was ushered into the drawing-room, and after waiting for about ten minutes a young man appeared. He was an exquisite dandy, spoke with a drawl, and seemed to be a masher of the first water.

He said he was Mrs. Vere's son, and that his mother was very poorly, and was on board of a yacht lying down at Greenock, as she had been ordered to take a little coasting trip. But if Mr. Henderson would not mind going down to Greenock to let Mrs. Vere see the bracelet his expenses would be paid and the cheque would be handed to him. Young Vere proposed to accompany the tradesman down to the yacht. After some little hesitation, Henderson decided to go, and so he and the exquisite young man set off for Greenock. Arrived there, young Vere made his way to a yacht's boat which was in waiting, and, embarking in the boat, he and the jeweller were conveyed to a large yacht anchored below Gourock. Henderson was conducted down to the cabin, which was exceedingly well furnished, and here he found Mrs. Vere reclining on a couch with a costly rug over her, and sitting beside her was a well-dressed man, tall and powerfully built, and very dark.

"This is my husband," the lady observed, indicating the dark gentleman by moving her hand towards him. Henderson bowed, and at once drew from his pocket the case containing the bracelet, which was displayed, glistening in all its pristine glory, lying on a bed of velvet. The lady took the case with the bracelet in it, and proceeded to examine it. The husband, however, did not appear to take any interest whatever in the affair, but, rising, he lighted a cigarette, and strolled to the end of the cabin, where there was a piano, and,

sitting down, he played a few bars of a waltz. In the meantime, the lady was engaging the jeweller's attention by asking him questions, and the son was close to her, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the really beautiful bracelet. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, a powerful arm was passed round the jeweller's neck, and he was half-strangled. The arm belonged to the husband, and he was possessed of such strength that he held the unfortunate jeweller in a vice-like grasp, preventing him from uttering a sound. It was obvious now to the unfortunate man that he had fallen into a den of thieves, and he concluded that his last hour had come. While the husband held him so that he was utterly powerless, the son drew some cords from under a settee, and dexterously wound them round Henderson's body, binding his hands and legs in such a way that he could not possibly move. By this time the jeweller, who was a small and delicate man, was exhausted, and felt as if he was dying. Possibly some signs in the captive's face alarmed the husband, who released him, and then he and the son carried him into a small cabin leading out of the saloon. There he was placed, bound hand and foot, on a couch, and was told that if he made the slightest noise he would be killed. Then the door was shut and locked.

It would appear that at this stage Henderson was so overcome by the rough handling he had received, as well as by the prospect of losing his valuable property, that he fainted, and he had reason to suppose he must have remained unconscious for some time. When he next recovered his senses the motion of the yacht made it obvious that she was going out to sea, and now it so far became clear to the jeweller what was intended. He had been trapped and inveigled by the most

specious arguments and plausible statements, and the adventurers, having got possession of the bracelet, were carrying Henderson off, but with what ulterior object he could not even guess at, but it seemed to him that they could have but one aim in taking him in the yacht, and that was to murder him. This thought caused him the keenest agony, and he made the most desperate efforts to free himself from the cords; but they had been only too effectually fastened, and he could not release his hands or feet. And now, to add to his misery, he was sea-sick, for the yacht was dancing about in a very lively way, and as the wretched man was not used to the sea his sufferings were very great. He was in total darkness, too, and he concluded it was night. The vessel was pitching and rolling very considerably, so that the sea must have been very rough. Prostrate as he was with sea-sickness, and bound hand and foot, the poor man could do nothing. But the suspense was dreadful, and the uncertainty as to his fate made the situation almost unbearable; while to add to his mental torture was the thought that his wife and family would be distracted by his absence.

Hour after hour went by, and the only sounds he heard were the whistling of the wind and the roaring of the sea. At length the door was opened, and a man appeared holding a lantern. The man was the tall, dark, powerful fellow who had done the garrotting. Behind him was another man—a stern, determined-looking fellow; and behind him again the exquisite youth who had said that he was Mrs. Vere's son. But now he was attired in oil-skin trousers and a blue pilot jacket.

"Now, look here," said the husband to the captive. "No doubt you set a value on your life, which is in our

power. We could easily deprive you of it by slipping you overboard, bound as you are, and no one would be any the wiser for it. But we don't want to proceed to such an extreme measure, and therefore, if you will promise to be quiet, we will release you, and set you on shore. Say, is that a bargain?"

The jeweller recognized how utterly useless it would be to try and make terms with these desperadoes, who, having resorted to such extreme means to deprive him of his property, were not likely to have much regard for his life, if they thought he was likely to place them in any danger. So he answered—

"As I am absolutely in your power, I must submit to your will, but I must protest against the barbarous treatment to which you have subjected me."

"That was necessary," answered Vere.

"From your point of view, not from mine," said the weller.

But since I am suffering torture, I beg of you to release me from these cords."

Without another word Vere and his son began to loosen the ropes, while the third man held the lantern. At last Henderson was released, but he was so cramped and his limbs ached to such a degree that he could not stand, and the son procured him some brandy and water, which revived him considerably. His first impulse was to fall upon his captors and fight for his life and property, but a very brief reflection served to convince him that the odds against him were far too heavy, and that he would be sacrificed. So, hard as it was to have to do so, he submitted quietly to his fate, and he was led on deck. Dawn was just beginning to break, and he saw the outlines of a singularly bold and rocky coast, against which the sea was breaking in long lines

of white foam. Young Vere and the other man disappeared over the side of the yacht, which was hove to, and they went down a rope ladder into a boat. Then Vere told Henderson to follow, which he did, and as soon as he was in the boat Vere joined them. The painter was then cast off, and young Vere and the other man took an oar each. They were evidently practised rowers, for they rowed well although the sea was very rough. It was clear also that they knew that part of the coast intimately, for they pulled direct between two masses of rock that rose up sheer from the sea, and which formed the entrance to a little natural bay where the sea was quite calm. The entrance was very narrow, and considerable care had to be exercised to prevent the boat being dashed against the rocks. At last the little craft glided into smooth water, and she was headed direct to a long strip of hard, white sand, on to which her bow was run, and Henderson was then told to alight.

"Will you tell me where I am?" he asked.

"Ask no questions," was the gruff answer from Vere. "Be thankful that you are not at the bottom of the sea."

The men now pushed the boat off, and with rapid and powerful strokes of the oars took her beyond the rocks again, and she disappeared from Henderson's sight. Although the light had increased, it was still too dark for him to discern much, so he sat down on a piece of rock to rest and think. It may well be imagined that his thoughts were gloomy enough. He was exhausted too, and very weary, the consequences being he fell asleep, and when next he awoke he was lying on the hard, white sand. The sun was high in the heavens and shining brilliantly, and on standing up and looking

about him Henderson saw that the place where he had been landed was a singularly wild rock-bound coast, and the only living things to be seen were thousands of seabirds. He felt very weak for the want of nourishment, so he resolved to try and get to some habitation.

For a time he followed the trend of the coast as well as he could, hoping to come to either a coastguard station or a fisherman's cabin. But all was desolation. The place was the haunt of seabirds only; so the wretched man mounted some cliffs and struck inland, and after a time he came to a wild moorland road running across a dreary expanse of boggy land. For two or three hours he followed this road, when to his great relief he met a man on horseback, and from him he learnt that he was in county Donegal, Ireland. This man set him on his way to a little town ten miles off. But so exhausted was he that he did not reach the place until nightfall. The first thing he did was to telegraph to his friends. Then he tried to partake of some food, but was unable to do so. He obtained accommodation at a rough, little inn, where in the course of the night he was seized with serious illness, which speedily developed into brain fever. The local doctor did his best for him, and, having ascertained his address, telegraphed for somebody to come and take care of him. As soon as possible his son and a daughter arrived on the scene. For nearly a month, however, the unfortunate man remained unconscious of his surroundings. At any rate, he was unable to give any coherent account of his adventures, and, of course, it was all a mystery to his family and friends as to how he came to be in Ireland. They thought, however, that he must have been seized with illness immediately on leaving his

place in Glasgow, and in a fit of mental aberration have wandered to Ireland without knowing where he was going to. Naturally they were greatly concerned about the valuable bracelet, which they knew he had taken away with him, but until he was able to give some rational account of his adventures they were powerless to act.

At length he recovered so far as to be able to relate his astonishing experiences, and then not a moment was lost in communicating with the police. Mr. Henderson was at once removed to his home in Glasgow, and all the particulars of the case were given to me with a view to my endeavouring to recover the stolen property, and to bring the thieves to justice. The audacity of these people almost exceeded belief, and the unusual course they had taken to get clear of the country proved that they were no ordinary swindlers. At the same time it led me to believe that there was not much chance of either getting the bracelet back or capturing the gang of thieves. It unfortunately happened that Mr. Henderson failed to ascertain the name of the yacht in which he had made such an unpleasant passage. But, any way, the Vere family—if that was really their name—had got such a long start that, if they made good use of it, they were not in much danger of being brought to book.

On inquiring at the address in the Park Quadrant where Mrs. Vere had lived, I found that she was regarded there as a very quiet and accomplished lady, and her husband and son were much liked. They had lived in the house about a twelvemonth, but since they had left it, was made evident they had swindled right and left, and it soon came out that they had obtained thousands of pounds' worth of goods, for which they had never paid.

Pursuing my investigations, I found they had hired a yacht called the *White Witch.* She was a large yacht of 190 tons, and was the property of a deceased gentleman whose executors found a difficulty in selling her at a fair valuation. They were, therefore, glad to accept the offer to hire her which was made by the Veres. The hire was to be for three months, and, of course, the Veres engaged their own crew, and no doubt they took good care to have people about them whom they could trust. We found out that the yacht had been taken to the Mediterranean, where she cruised about for some time, and at last sailed up the Tagus to Lisbon. There the Veres disappeared, and the yacht was seized for debt by the Portuguese authorities. At this point trace of the swindlers was lost; but it was clear that they did not remain in Portugal, or they would have been heard of, as it is not difficult to find foreigners in that country. It was probable they had crossed the frontier into Spain, and so escaped. At any rate, not a sign of them was forthcoming, and I abandoned the quest. Poor Mr. Henderson, although he had quite recovered his health, had by no means recovered his spirits, for the loss he was called upon to bear was a heavy one; and then his dignity and pride, of course, had suffered very considerably. He was pleased to think himself a cautious and far-seeing man, but he had been thoroughly outwitted, though the way in which it was done was so ingenious and clever that a smarter man than he was might well have been taken in.

Some six or seven months later I happened one night to be in the Edinburgh Theatre Royal, when I noticed a young lady and gentleman in one of the boxes. The gentleman was a young man, four or five and twenty perhaps, dark-complexioned, and good-looking. It

seemed to me, as I observed him, that his face was very familiar, and I began to puzzle my brains trying to think where I had seen him before. But I could fix no time nor place, nor recall any incident with which I could connect him. After much cogitation, however, I came to the conclusion that I had never seen him in the flesh, but had seen his likeness. Then it flashed upon me all of a sudden that he was young Vere, whose photo I had obtained possession of during the time I was trying to get on the track of the Vere family. Of course there was a possibility of my being in error, so I resolved to act with great caution. I shadowed the young man, and found he was staying at one of the hotels, and that the young lady—to whom he was paying his addresses—was the landlord's daughter. He was known as Robert Pearson. He and the young lady had been acquainted for some time, and he was considered to be a man of position and a member of a good family.

In the face of all this it grew upon me, and I became convinced that Pearson was none other than Vere, and so I determined not to lose sight of him. Three weeks later it came to my knowledge that he was to leave for London that night, and in the same train in which he travelled I also travelled. When he reached London the following morning he took a cab and drove to Russell Square, and in the house he went to I learnt there was a Mrs. Pearson living, and she was supposed to be the mother of the young man. Nothing much was known of them; they were very quiet people, considered to be highly respectable, and paid their way. They had been there about three months, and were believed to have come from abroad. I managed to get a sight of the lady, and though in some respects she

did not answer the description I had of Mrs. Vere, in others she did. I therefore telegraphed to Mr. Henderson, asking him to come up to London, as I wished him to try to identify a person we were both anxious to meet. He at once complied with my request; but as we did not wish to arouse the suspicions of the people we suspected we had to act with great circumspection, and it was three or four days before Mr. Henderson was able to see Mrs. Pearson. Then, although he expressed a strong belief she was the woman who had swindled him, he was, nevertheless, unable to say positively that she was. He said that she looked different somehow, and he thought she had changed the colour of her hair by dyeing it. But on seeing her a second time his doubts vanished, and he said positively that she was the woman. On the strength of that I applied for and obtained a warrant for her arrest and the arrest of her son, and when I went to execute the warrant, the lady affected to be highly indignant, while the son threatened me with all the pains and penalties of the law. However, I was not deterred from doing my duty, and in spite of the most vigorous protests, I conveyed my captives to the station. In the course of a few days it became evident that we had made a very important arrest, and I was enabled to prove that the people I had got were the people I wanted. The woman was found to have dyed her hair, changing the colour from a dark brown to a light golden hue, and it was this which had made Mr. Henderson doubtful at first. But now there was no longer any uncertainty in the matter, for amongst her papers we found letters which had been addressed to her as Mrs. Maude Johnson Vere. This was conclusive; and after having conformed with certain legal formalities, I was enabled

to convey my charges under strict guard to Glasgow. The woman now showed signs of suffering the keenest mental distress, and I believe that had she not been well watched she would have committed suicide.

The story I was in the process of time enabled to unfold with regard to the woman was a truly remarkable one, and served to some extent to place her in a position in which sympathy could hardly be withheld. She was a member of a really good family, and married a man who had been in the army, and served some years in India. His career there, however, had been very shady, and he was compelled to resign his commission. From that time he seemed to have lived entirely by his wits, and his wife and son became entirely subject to his will, and yielded blindly to his influence. After the incident of the bracelet they did go into Spain, but a month or two later the husband, whose real name was Alfred Knowles Turner, took himself off, and it was not known where he had gone to. Young Turner, *alias* Pearson, it turned out, was acquainted with the Edinburgh publican's daughter, whom he had been courting for a considerable time, and he could not resist the temptation of going to see her; and it was owing to that fact that he fell into the law's clutches. He got off, however, with a merely light punishment, but his mother was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The husband, an arch rogue, was never captured, I am sorry to say, nor was the bracelet or its value ever recovered, which was a source of unending grief to Henderson, the jeweller, who said that he was prepared to stake everything he possessed in the world that nobody would ever swindle him in such a way again. I should have been quite prepared to have backed him on that.

DR. DENNY'S CRIME.

It was in the early sixties that I was called upon to investigate a very remarkable crime that in some respects stands out with distinct originality. The public memory is proverbially short, but many people will no doubt remember the sensation that was caused at the time by the revelations that were made. Indeed, that well-known legal luminary, the late Sir William Gregson, stated that during fifty years' experience as a criminal lawyer and judge, he had never had to deal with anything so remarkable before.

To begin at the beginning, a certain young medico named Peter Denny, who had run a somewhat wild and shady youthful career, took up his residence in Portsmouth, and bought a practice there, or rather his father bought it for him. Denny had made two voyages to sea as a medical officer. One of these voyages was in a steamer, the other on board of a sailing ship, in which he practically made a voyage round the world. This ship sailed from Liverpool to Sydney with emigrants who were in the medical care of Denny. During the passage out his conduct was such that it brought him under the notice of the Emigration Commissioners at Sydney, who held an inquiry with closed doors. But it would seem that they were unable to substantiate certain charges that were made, and although Denny did not escape censure, the Commissioners declined to press the matter against him. From Australia he proceeded with the ship to Madras, thence to Calcutta, China,

Japan, Java, and various other places; and having completed his wanderings without much profit to his purse, however much his mind might have gained, he settled down, as already stated, in Portsmouth.

Denny was a most plausible, smooth-tongued fellow, with a peculiarly fascinating manner and address. Moreover, he was exceedingly handsome; but his vanity was insufferable; at least it was so to most people, though he managed to become the centre of a group of admirers who believed, or affected to believe, that he was a man to be worshipped. At any rate, he succeeded for a time in making himself very popular, and he was welcomed to the houses of a good many of the best families of the neighbourhood. At last, however, the breath of scandal tarnished his name, and he lost caste a good deal; but he was a man who seemed indifferent to that sort of thing, and his very effrontery and impudence enabled him to hold his ground, and those who spoke against him generally got the worst of it in the end.

For some time, it appears, a courtship went on between him and a young lady of high social position. She was a member of an old county family, and her father was a vice-admiral in the navy, while her brothers also held naval appointments. The family, however, did not approve of the match, so the young lady was taken abroad, and Denny was informed that if he made any attempt to influence her he would do so at his peril. Whether he was influenced by the threat or did not think the game worth the candle it is difficult to say, but what is certain is this, he commenced soon after to pay his addresses to a Miss Adelaide Bartlett, whose father had been a naval medical officer, but who had died while on active service during the Crimean war.

Miss Bartlett, who was heiress to a small fortune, lived with her widowed mother and two sisters at Southsea. There is every reason to suppose that Denny was attracted to Adelaide by reason of her money, for she had no good looks to recommend her, being decidedly plain. Her people, it would appear, were at first very much averse to her countenancing the much-talked-of young doctor, of whom somebody had said he was "as handsome as Apollo, though as wicked as Nero." But she had fallen entirely under the sway of his fascination, and she vowed she would have him whatever the consequences were. In the face of this it was not deemed prudent to oppose her wishes, and so matters were allowed to take their course; and in six months' time Dr. Denny led Miss Bartlett to the altar.

The first year of their married life was, as far as is known, a fairly happy one. A child was born to the young couple, but only lived a few weeks, and, according to common rumour, the loss of this child preyed very much on Denny's mind, and for some time he drank more than was good for him. At last he pulled himself together once more, but he had done his reputation an irreparable injury, and his practice fell away to such an extent that had he been dependent on it he must have been very seriously affected. In addition to her small fortune, however, his wife had become possessed of a large sum through the death of a wealthy relative, and Denny, it would seem, preferred to live a life of idleness, and spend his wife's money to earning money for himself. Quarrels between the young couple now became very frequent. At any rate, it was known that Mr. and Mrs. Denny did not live in that perfect unison with each other which should mark the lives of married people.

For some years this state of things continued. Denny managed to work up a fairly good practice again, for he was regarded as being really clever in his profession; and a doctor who begets confidence need not lack business whatever black spots there may be against his reputation. In spite of a fair amount of success, Denny suddenly decided, for reasons that were then best known to himself, to sell his Portsmouth practice, and remove to Glasgow. Of course he was pressed for some explanation by those interested in him, and especially so by his wife's relatives, but the only explanation he vouchsafed was that he hoped to do better in Glasgow than he could do in Portsmouth.

In accordance with his determination he ultimately moved to the North, greatly to the regret of the Bartletts, who having regard to the unhappy life she led, had tried to persuade the doctor's wife to induce him to consent to a separation. But this she would not hear of. It was known that in spite of all his faults she was much attached to him, and she told her friends that she had taken her husband for better or worse, and though he should prove worse it was still her duty to cleave to him. It was beyond doubt that for two or three years after their removal to Glasgow he treated her very badly, and though, as far as is known, he never actually subjected her to personal violence, he made her life well-nigh intolerable.

Amongst his acquaintances he allowed it to be understood—he took good care, in fact, that it should be so understood—that his wife had an abominable temper, and that all the domestic friction and unhappiness were due to this temper combined with unjustifiable jealousy. At last it became known that Mrs. Denny had disappeared, and when the doctor was questioned as to

where she had gone to, he replied that she had taken herself off without any explanation, and, as far as he knew, she had returned to her friends in Portsmouth.

For a little while this satisfied curiosity, until one of Mrs. Denny's sisters unexpectedly went to Glasgow to visit the Dennys, and to her amazement found that her sister had been absent for some weeks. The doctor professed to be no less amazed when he was informed that her relatives had not seen anything of her or heard from her during that time, and then he expressed a decided opinion that since she had not gone to her former home she had found somebody more to her taste than he was, and had eloped.

It may well be imagined that this did not satisfy Miss Bartlett. Indeed, she told her brother-in-law that nothing would convince her that her sister had been guilty of such a course of conduct, and there must be some other way of accounting for the disappearance. When Mrs. Bartlett in Portsmouth and the rest of the family heard the news, they were very shocked and alarmed, and then Denny pretended to share this alarm, and eventually communicated with me, asking me to call upon him as early as possible. I complied with this request, and met Dr. Denny for the first time in my life. Of course it will be understood that at this time I knew nothing whatever about him, his career, or his connections, and all the foregoing particulars, with which I have prefaced my narrative, I was to learn subsequently. It will not be uninteresting or out of place if I here describe Dr. Denny's personal appearance, and the impression he made upon me at this time.

In age he was about thirty-seven, of medium height, with a well-knit, muscular frame, a ruddy complexion,

and handsome face, with very dark hair and eyes. He wore a moustache, but no whiskers or beard. There was nothing restless in the eyes, which, as a rule, betray so much of the mind and the nature, but in Denny's case the eyes met yours with a fearless gaze, and there was undoubtedly a certain mesmeric influence, or anything else one likes to call it, about them, which was well calculated to draw people of weaker minds to him. Add to this a remarkably polished address, a fluency of speech, an apparent sincerity of purpose, and a gentlemanly bearing, and it will not be difficult to understand how, in spite of his shortcomings, he was able to hold his own where men less gifted would have entirely gone to the wall.

I have no hesitation in saying that at first I was much impressed in his favour, but there was one feature that did not please me, and that was his mouth. It was sensual, with indications of innate cruelty. I don't mean to suggest that the physiognomist would have said that the doctor had necessarily a cruel nature, but any one knowing even the rudiments of the science of physiognomy would not have hesitated to pronounce the man capable, under certain circumstances, of cold-blooded cruelty. For myself, I came to the conclusion that he was a man who might make a good friend, but who, beyond all shadow of doubt, could become a terrible enemy, and that he was capable of cherishing a lasting and bitter enmity against any one who had done him a real or fancied wrong, and there was nothing he would stop short of to inflict an injury on any one he thoroughly disliked.

I dwell particularly on this impression I received, this feeling he created in my mind, because it was perfectly unaided by anything I knew or anything I

had heard of him. In the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the term he was an absolute stranger to me, but I saw he was no ordinary person, that he had a distinct individuality, and had it not been for those mouth-signs, I should have thought him a most reliable man, and one to be implicitly trusted. Briefly, he explained what he required of me. He said that he had been married for about ten years, that lately, notwithstanding his wife had evinced a most annoying and altogether unwarranted jealousy of him, he had had grounds to suspect that her affection for him had been weaned away by another, and that it would ultimately be proved that she had gone off with him, in which case she would have to take all the consequences, for she could expect no mercy or no forgiveness from him as her wronged and injured husband.

This expression of feeling on the part of Denny fully confirmed the impression I had conceived about his being a bad enemy.

"Of course," he continued, "if my surmise is correct, don't see that I should trouble about her, for a man is better rid of a worthless woman; but as there is a chance that I may be mistaken, I wish to prove one thing or the other. Moreover, her relatives, as is only natural they should be, are greatly distressed, and so for their sakes I wish you to take every possible means, regardless of expense, to trace her."

He appeared to be very sincere in what he said, and I believed he was sincere so far as wishing to trace his wife was concerned; but I was not misled into supposing for one single instance that he any longer entertained one atom of regard for her. If I had been asked to put my thoughts into words on this point, I should have said that love for his wife had long since fled, and an

uncompromising hatred had taken its place. Let it be borne in mind that this was purely inferential on my part. It was a deduction made from generalizing his manner, his words, and the mode of expressing them. Under his sauvity was betrayed a suppressed irritation. This might not have been distinguishable by every one, but it was so by me; and surely there is no egotism in this, for the faculty of intuitive discernment was part of my nature, and I had schooled and developed it by long years of training in pitting my will in the cause of law and order against the skill of those who defied and outraged the law.

Having got some brief particulars of Mrs. Denny's relatives, and promising the doctor that I would leave no stone unturned to let him have news of his wife, I took my leave. Necessarily the first course to be pursued in carrying out the work I had undertaken was to learn from outside sources, if possible, what grounds there were for suspecting that Mrs. Denny had eloped. I therefore directed my inquiries to this end. Having collected up a mass of gossip, I subjected it to the winnowing and sifting process, and when I had made due allowance for exaggeration, prejudice, and ill feeling, I came to the conclusion that the lady had probably been driven from her home by her husband's ill-treatment, and that, hungering for sympathy and companionship, she might have proved false to her marriage vow; or it was just as probable she might have committed suicide, seeking for that peace in the grave which married life had denied her.

Deeming it very desirable that I should learn something of the lady's disposition and character from her own relatives, I went down to Portsmouth, and there I was placed in possession of all the particulars with

regard to Denny which I have detailed at the beginning of this narrative. No room was left for me to doubt that his relatives by marriage entertained no kindly feeling for him. They bluntly averred that by his cruel and heartless conduct he had blasted his wife's life and destroyed her peace of mind. They spoke strongly, because they felt strongly, and again I had to make due allowance for prejudice, which is never impartial. But, after all, I could not avoid the conclusion that Dr. Denny had a large element of the brute in his nature, and I felt more than ever inclined to suicide.

Mrs. Bartlett's friends adjured me to do everything I could think of to ascertain the lady's fate, for they indignantly and angrily declared that the story of her elopement was a wicked fabrication on her husband's part to create sympathy in his favour, and that no living soul could justly impeach her honour and chastity; and they authorized me, if I thought it advisable, to offer one hundred pounds reward for any information that would lead to the discovery of the lady's whereabouts, or proof of her death, if dead. I told them that I did not think it necessary to offer a reward in the present stage of matters, and I assured them that they could rely on my exerting myself to the utmost to unravel the mystery.

I returned to Glasgow, and had another interview with the doctor, but I did not tell him that I had been to Portsmouth. Knowing what I did now, I was enabled to see him from a different standpoint, and the weakness of his character appeared to me much more prominently. That meeting, however, did little more than accentuate my first impressions, and my next step was to clandestinely interview one by one the respected members of his household. They consisted of a cook, a general servant, a housemaid, a groom, and a coachman.

The consensus of the opinion amongst these people was that the doctor and his wife led a cat-and-dog life; and though possibly there were faults on her side, there were infinitely more on his. The housemaid's testimony was more definite and distinct than the others. She had been more closely in contact with them, and she told me that she had on more than one occasion heard the doctor vow and declare that he hated and abhorred his wife more than any other human being in the whole world, and once in the maid's hearing he had exclaimed to his wife—

"If you had not crossed my path like an evil shadow, I should have got a woman I could have loved, and a woman who would have made me rich."

After all this I more strongly inclined to the theory of suicide. The poor lady had been driven to desperation and madness by her husband's cruelty, and daily I expected to hear that her body had been found. But the days stretched into weeks, and not a trace of her was forthcoming. Again I had an interview with the husband. He seemed unusually cheerful, and in good spirits. I ventured to suggest, since all other means had now failed to discover what had become of his wife, that he should offer a reward for information concerning her. He jumped at this readily, and said he would offer any sum I liked to name. As a matter of fact, I simply wanted to test him; and though on the first blush it may not be easy to comprehend why it was so, his ready assent to the proposal raised the first suspicion in my mind that he probably could reveal what had become of his wife. To put it in plain words, I began to think he had murdered her, and from that moment I turned my investigations in quite another channel. I began now to try and discover if he had ever done anything or

said anything that might be constructed into an avowed desire for her death. Being a medical man with a knowledge of the science of medicine, he might have accomplished her death easily enough, and in a way probably that might have defied science to reveal how it was done. For it is within the power of every doctor to so simulate disease in a human being that the most practised eye may be deceived. Or he can produce death suddenly, and the means used will remain undiscoverable. But in this latter case there is more risk, because sudden death would probably lead to an autopsy, and if there were no internal symptoms of disease, suspicions might be awakened, inquiries would result; and awkward facts might come out. Now, Dr. Denny was a clever and intelligent man, and would avoid anything that would arouse suspicion against him. Of so much I was convinced. But still the idea grew upon me that he had made away with her. There was this difficulty, however, to be reconciled: that while it was easy to kill, it was by no means easy to dispose of the victim's body. This is the one tremendous obstacle that confronts every one who wilfully takes the life of a fellow-being. The body remains as damning evidence of the crime, and the laws of all civilized countries are so framed as to make the clandestine disposal of the dead a tremendous risk, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred any one attempting it would be detected sooner or later.

The offer of the reward, as I anticipated would be the case, produced no result. Not a suggestion of a trace of the missing lady was forthcoming. Three months had passed since her mysterious disappearance, and all hope of her being alive was almost abandoned by her sorrowing friends. For my own part, I was now

absolutely convinced she was dead, and quite as convinced that her husband had murdered her. But the problem to be solved was, firstly, the means he had used to kill her; and secondly, how he had disposed of her body. The latter half of the problem seemed almost unsolvable, on the face of it, seeing that more than three months had elapsed. But I did not despair, and at last I exclaimed to myself—and it was like a text to work from—"As a doctor can slay, so he can preserve that which he slays."

From this I built up a new theory. I struck a key-note that gave me a clue. I supposed that the doctor had murdered his wife, and, having murdered her, he had used his scientific knowledge to preserve her remains, so that, decay being arrested, they should not betray themselves. And now it was for me to find out where he had concealed the body, for it must still be in existence, unless he had managed to absolutely consume it to ashes and scatter the ashes. But that idea was untenable. It was not to be thought of. Virtually it was impossible. Therefore, the body was somewhere. Where? I made a mental vow that ere long I would answer the question.

I adopted new tactics now. I shadowed the doctor. Little did he dream how I watched him, as a hawk will watch his prey. Had he but got an inkling of it his laughter would have been less loud, his brow less free from care. If my theory was right, it was evident that he had come now to believe that all danger was passed. His terrible secret had stood the test of months, and so far he had defied my skill.

I ascertained that he was a frequent visitor at the house of a lady, who had an unmarried daughter, a woman of about thirty, who was the reputed possessor

of two thousand a year. Whether he thought that the lapse of a reasonable time would be taken as evidence of his wife's death or not I cannot say, but it was revealed to me that, in a mild way, he was paying his addresses to the lady with the two thousand per annum, and he had known her for a year or more before his wife's disappearance, while his partiality for her had given rise to many comments and some little whisperings of scandal. That lady and her money were—if I was correct—a sufficiently strong motive for the crime.

One day during the doctor's absence I obtained entrance to his house by a ruse, and I spent a whole hour in his consulting room and library. Let it not be supposed it was a profitless or an idle hour. In an ordinary way I might have found much to interest me, for he had a fine collection of books, and a costly and magnificent microscope; and microscopical investigation was a subject which had a perfect fascination for me. But it was to the books that I now directed my attention; and for one book in particular I searched. Of course I did not know that the book was there. It was a mere speculation on my part; a little wild, mayhap, and yet not so wild when read in the light of logic. What I wanted to ascertain was if amongst his tomes he numbered a treatise on the art of embalming. My search was rewarded. On a top shelf, hidden away, I discovered a quarto volume bound in calf. It was a translation of Professor Paul Lavigné's well-known work, "The Art of Embalming, Ancient and Modern."

I eagerly turned the leaves and scanned the pages, and I came to one part where a leaf was turned down. It was the beginning of an article on the modern system of preserving a dead body by means of injections of arsenic into the veins. In an elaborate and painfully

minute way—that is, painfully minute to the layman,—it described the whole process and the means to be observed. The pages of that portion of the book bore traces of having been recently well fingered, and, moreover, it was the only part where the paper-knife had been used. All the other pages remained intact as they had been bound.

I returned the book to the shelf exactly where I had taken it from, and I departed from the house with a fresh light to aid me in my attempt to unravel the mystery I had pledged myself to reveal.

A week later I made another discovery. I learnt that about a year before the doctor had purchased a small property in the southern outskirts of Glasgow. The property consisted of a one-story country house, standing in about two acres of land, part of which was laid out as an orchard. Why he had purchased it no one seemed to know; for though he might have sold it again, or have let it to advantage, he would do neither, and so it was shut up, and was gradually going to ruin. The windows were boarded up; the garden was a wilderness of weeds; vermin had got into the orchard trees, and were destroying their vitality. The whole place looked melancholy, ghostly, and forlorn. Viewed in the light of what I had now learned, that place had a strange fascination for me. It was very suggestive of a tomb, and I regarded it as a tomb. And one dark night, when there were neither moon nor stars, I gained an entrance in company with a trusted companion. We were provided with a crowbar and dark lanterns. The rats that had made their home in the house seemed to resent our intrusion, and there was much scuttering and squalling as we entered. A bat or two had effected a lodgment there also. They probably had got access

through some hole in the roof. They and the rats imparted an awe-inspiring gruesomeness to the place, which was permeated with a dank, mildewy, earth-like odour that was wonderfully suggestive of a charnel-house.

From room to room we went, throwing the gleam of our lantern into every hole and corner. We examined the fireplaces, the floors, the cupboards; we tapped the walls and the ceilings; but nothing was revealed to us until we went into an upper room. In that room was a cupboard in the thickness of the wall. The door of the cupboard was fastened. That was suspicious. It was more suspicious that it was screwed up, the heads of the screws being red with rust. It was suggestive and strange that a cupboard in an empty house should be thus sealed. What was there to guard? Something terrible, perhaps. As I laid my hand on the door I turned to my companion, and said, "This cupboard holds Dr. Denny's secret."

We had no screwdriver, therefore could not draw the screws. But we noted also that the door was locked; the rusty bolt could be seen in the socket. In the absence of screwdriver and key we brought the crow-bar into play. We worked away for nearly an hour before we made any impression. Of course, we might have battered the panels in, but that would have necessitated noise, and we wished to avoid that. We got at last a leverage. We were enabled to insert the the point of the crowbar between the door and the jamb, then by means of our united strength we forced the door. The lock burst, the screws tore away from the wood-work, and at length the door stood open. Then a ghastly, horrible sight was revealed. Standing up-right in the cupboard was a swathed human figure. It

was not a pleasant thing to have to do, but we did it. We lifted the figure out and laid it on the floor. With my pocket-knife I cut the swathing from the face—it was the face, hard as stone and white as marble, of the late Mrs. Denny. The corpse was free from all objectionable odour. The embalming process had been well carried out.

We had done enough for that night, and left the noisome place with a sigh of relief. I had some cause for the sense of satisfaction I experienced at the success that had attended my efforts to solve the mystery. The mystery was solved now, and Dr. Denny's crime was no longer a secret.

The following day had not grown very old before I arrested Denny on a charge of murdering his wife. It was a shock to him, but he tried to make light of it. He said the charge was preposterous and absurd, that it could never be substantiated, for not an atom of evidence was yet forthcoming of his wife's death.

I allowed him for the time being to remain in ignorance. But he must have divined the true state of matters, and have felt that his doom was sealed. When the body of Mrs. Denny—which was fully identified—was examined, no external causes of death could be discovered. Nor did the most rigid autopsy or the most careful analysis reveal any cause. The body had been excellently well preserved, but the cause of death was a mystery. It is a mystery still, for Dr. Denny went to his merited doom with the secret locked in his own black heart. Nothing whatever would induce him to reveal it; nor did the trial bring to light the means he used to inveigle his unfortunate wife to that lonesome house; but there could be no doubt that he murdered her, none whatever that the whole crime was planned

and deliberately carried out in cold blood. He bought the house for the purpose, thinking that there his dreadful secret could be shut up from prying human eyes, and when in a year's time the matter had been forgotten, means might be found to bury the embalmed body, so that all danger would be removed. But murder will out, and this case was but another exemplification of the well-worn adage.

THE WHITE GANG.

The desperate and extraordinary means to which unprincipled men will resort in order to enrich themselves at the expense of others is very forcibly exemplified in the incidents as set forth in the following story.

It had been a very brilliant summer, and yachting on the Clyde had been carried on with great spirit and under exceptional circumstances as regards weather. About the beginning of September a very fine steam yacht of about eighty tons steamed into Rothesay Bay and anchored there. As she was an utter stranger, much curiosity was expressed to know to whom she belonged and where she had come from. It was soon noised about that she was the property of Count Lara Cavillero, a Spanish gentleman of great wealth residing in France. He had been cruising about in the Channel with some of his family and a party of friends, and, taking advantage of the splendid weather, he had been induced to turn the head of his vessel north and visit Scotland. Now, nobody had ever heard of Count Lara Cavillero, or had the remotest idea who he was, what family he represented, what his means were, or anything at all about him. But that apparently was of no consequence. There was his yacht, one of the handsomest that had ever been seen in those waters, and on board of her was the noble owner—a real live Count, with a high-sounding, aristocratic name; so the snobs of Rothesay, and the little people who believed themselves great, hastened to bow down at his feet and pay him homage. To

them a foreign Count was a *rara avis*, and so they determined to make much of him.

In personal appearance Count Lara Cavillero was not imposing. He was a little, shrivelled, yellow-faced man, with raven-black hair, raven-black eyes, and a raven-black moustache. His hair was cropped close to the scalp, *à la* blacking-brush fashion; he wore a long, flowing cravat tied in a big bow, large turned-down collar, the most faultless of clothes of true Continental cut, patent leather shoes, a profusion of jewellery, including diamond studs and diamond rings. He had a ponderous watch-chain, and a massive gold watch, the back of which seemed encrusted with diamonds. Although physically he would not count for much, his clothes were faultless, his manner perfect, his air *distingué*, and he spoke broken English delightfully. In addition, his smile was said to be ravishing, and his white gleaming teeth, which were without a speck of decay, caused many an envious sigh.

The Count had his wife on board, and she was a very striking contrast to her husband. She was big, not to say ponderous, with a pleasing face, however, dark eyes, a good complexion, and a mass of dark hair. She was accompanied by her daughter, a young lady who might have been any age from twenty to thirty. She was exceedingly like her mother both as regards figure and features. In addition, there were half-a-dozen male guests whom it is not necessary to individualize.

The distinguished party who had thus so unexpectedly descended on the Scottish coast were, it need scarcely be said, the sensation of the hour. The Provost, who was a grocer, and given to mangling the Queen's English, accompanied by the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker, hastened to welcome the Count

and his family and friends, and to assure him that the all-important town of Rothesay would do every possible honour to him.

The Count, in the name of his wife, daughter, and friends, expressed himself as peculiarly gratified at this reception—"so unexpected, so spontaneous, so characteristically warm-hearted," &c., &c. He had invited all and sundry to visit his yacht, and the decks were soon crowded with gaping visitors, who were amazed at the luxuriantly-appointed vessel—a vessel that was in every way worthy of so distinguished an owner.

The Provost, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, with their satellites, were regaled on champagne and chicken; and when, after they had done something more than ample justice to this excellent fare, somebody amongst them hinted that "a wee drappie of the Auld Kirk" would not be a bad thing, so whisky of an age and blend that defied cavil was produced, and a box of choice cigars was placed on the table. Of course, the guests could not be expected to let these good things go begging. In fact, it would have looked like despising the hospitality of their host, so they fell to, and made an afternoon of it and a night of it, and when they took their departure towards the small hours they were husky of speech and unsteady of leg. But they had had a high old time of it, and, no doubt, regretted that pleasure in this life is so ephemeral, and that after a night's carouse comes the morning's reflection, when what seemed all *couleur de rose* under certain conditions is found to have changed to a sombre hue. The next day the Count and his party were entertained at a hastily-organized luncheon party at the Royal Hotel, at which, of necessity, the Provost, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker still figured, and there was more

carousing. The amiability of the Count and of his fascinating wife and daughter was much commented upon, and they found their way to the hearts of all present, and every one voted them charming people.

For four days more did the distinguished guests prolong their stay, visiting such lions as the island had to show. Very tame lions, to be sure, but still the most was made of them, and the visitors declared themselves enraptured. Then they announced that the hour of their departure was at hand. They declared that they tore themselves away with reluctance, but go they must. They wanted to pay a flying visit to Glasgow, but the Count had heard that it was a very big place, and that a stranger was lost there. So he ventured to ask the Provost, in the most delicate manner imaginable, and with a profuse outpouring of apologies, if he could furnish him with letters of introduction to any one.

This request made the worthy Provost suddenly grow a couple of inches taller, and caused his manly bosom to swell out like a pouter pigeon. He could scarcely believe his own senses; that he, a grocer, and the Provost of Rothesay, should have the honour of furnishing a real live Spanish Count with letters of introduction. Furnish them? Of course he would; and forthwith, and in his best handwriting and the best grammar he could command, he wrote one to his brother, a man in a very large way of business as an iron merchant, and another to the manager of a bank, and yet a third to his dear old mother, a venerable lady verging on eighty, and whose husband had originally hawked fish in the Glasgow streets, but subsequently started a little fishmonger's shop, then got a big fishmonger's shop, next became a wholesale fishmonger, and accumulated a fortune, for Jamie M'Neil—that was his name—was a

thrifty man. He made one suit of clothes do him a year at least; his palate craved for nothing stronger than whisky, and nothing more delicate than porridge, and Jamie would never spend a halfpenny if a farthing would do; and so having by these means, and by working early and late, accumulated a fortune, and worn himself out before his time, he popped off suddenly, was buried with honours, and the weeping widow was enabled to enjoy the fruits of his labour and the harvest of his self-denial. Therefore, Jamie M'Neil's life was not altogether useless. These little details are referred to because, as will be seen presently, they are not without a bearing on what follows.

In the letters of introduction which Provost M'Neil furnished the Count with he spoke proudly of "My friend, the Count"; his pen almost danced as he wrote the words large, for it was such an honour, you know.

Well, the Count and his party having bade farewell to their Rothesay acquaintances, steamed away amidst the hearty cheering of the crowd who had assembled to see them off, and the beautiful yacht headed straight for the Clyde. The worthy Provost regretted that his aristocratic friend had gone, but still the best of friends must part.

When the Count reached the city on the shores of the muddy stream, he lost no time in presenting his letters of introduction to the venerable Mrs. M'Neil, who bore her years lightly, and seemed destined to stretch the span out to a hundred at least. She had not had the fret and worry of making the fortune, but had simply to spend it, and her tastes inclining a little higher than did those of her late husband's, she lived in a more imposing style, and kept her little pony-carriage, in which she daily took her airings. She found the Count,

the Countess, and Mademoiselle their daughter perfectly charming; and as they *were friends* of her dear son, the Provost of Rothesay, she, of course, accorded them the heartiest of welcomes. It is testimony to the fascinating power possessed by the little, yellow-faced Count, that within a week he had become, so to speak, the old lady's confessor. She consulted him on many things, and he learned from her venerable lips that she had no less a sum than fifteen thousand pounds invested in three per cent. consols, whereupon he expressed surprise, for though a foreign Count, he seemed to be well acquainted with the nature of English securities. He told her that it was shameful that so large a sum should only bring in so small a return.

"My dear madam," he is reported to have said, "what a pity it is that you don't turn your money to a better account. Really, your income from fifteen thousand pounds ought to be treble what it is. Why, we would guarantee you seven per cent., at least, from our tobacco estates in Cuba; could we not, my dear?" This to his wife.

"Well, dear, we really don't want any more money on the estates," answered the devoted Countess.

"Of course not, darling," he replied; "but to oblige our dear old friend, we would accept it if she cared to place it in our hands."

"Oh, well, of course, that is another thing altogether," exclaimed the Countess, with a gracious smile.

The old lady when she heard this pricked up her ears, for she would scarcely have been human if she had not felt fascinated at the idea of more than doubling her income; and then to be assisted to that end by her beloved son's dear friend, the Count Lara Cavillero,

was a stroke of good fortune that she could not feel too deeply grateful for. So the next day the affable Count and his equally affable wife and daughter took tea with the venerable party, and to her wondering gaze they displayed a highly-coloured pictorial representation of Cuban tobacco estates, showing extensive ranges of substantially-built factories, and acres and acres of tobacco under cultivation, with hundreds of negroes weeding, hoeing, pruning, gathering, stacking, &c. And underneath in English was printed, "A view of portion of the extensive tobacco plantations of the Count Lara Cavillero, situated at Cuba." In addition to this the Count was good enough to read the translation of an article said to have been published in a French paper. It was written by a correspondent, who had personally visited the estates, and described them in the most glowing language. He spoke of their productiveness, and said that for nearly two generations they had been in the hands of Count Lara Cavillero and his family, who had over and over again been asked to sell them, or portions of them, to a company; but the offer had always been declined. The writer further asserted that the return on the capital invested was equal to twenty per cent., and that the holders of the property were to be congratulated on their splendid investment.

Now, after this glowing eulogium was it to be wondered at that the old lady got a little excited and restless, and the condescension of the Count in venturing to befriend and notice such a humble individual as herself quite took her breath away?

The Count by this time had already presented his letter of introduction to the son in the iron trade. He was a plain, uncultivated man, to whom life had one

sole aim and purpose—that was to make money. But occasionally it occurred to him that a little indulgence of the flesh was admissible, and for a few days he would indulge in an excess of alcohol. That, however, was but rarely, and it was about his only weakness, unless his money-grubbing could be considered a weakness. Hard and practical as this James M'Neil was—being the eldest son, he perpetuated his father's christian name—he, nevertheless, fell under the spell and fascination of the Count and his charming family; and, being a bachelor, he found the arts and wiles of the Count's daughter quite irresistible.

On the day following the conversation with Mrs. M'Neil, the Count invited her and her son to visit him on board of his yacht, and the dear old lady was in the seventh heaven of delight. She said she would drive down in her pony-carriage, but the affable Count would not hear of such a thing. He would send a brougham and pair of horses for her from a livery stable, and *en route* she could pick up her son.

The brougham was duly sent—and a very handsome turn-out it was—and the aged Mrs. M'Neil and her middle-aged bachelor son arrived in due course at their destination, and were received in person by the Count, who was simply delightful, and insisted on giving his arm to the old lady, while, by some strange law of gravitation, the Count's daughter and James M'Neil came together. James had got himself up for the occasion. He had tried hard to scrub some of the grime out of his hands, and had partially succeeded, and he had arrayed himself in a clean woollen shirt, with a fearful and wonderful collar, and a fearful and wonderful necktie of the rainbow hue. For these

honoured guests the Count had thoughtfully provided a little plain repast, consisting of a few delicacies of the season and some choice wines, including champagne. It was understood that the Count's other friends and fellow-voyagers had gone away on pleasure bent, and were on a tour somewhere, so that the Count expressed fears that his guests might find it a little slow and dull. But James M'Neil would probably, had he spoken his true thoughts, have said that if no one else but the Count's daughter had been present life would have been unable to afford him any greater bliss; while the old lady, no doubt, felt that her dear son's friend, the Count, and his all too-delightful family were as much company as she desired.

The details of that afternoon's festivities I cannot describe, because I know them not, but the exercise of a very small amount of imagination will enable the reader to fill in the picture for himself, But what I do know beyond doubt is this—James M'Neil looked on the wine that was red, and fell under the fascination of Mademoiselle's eyes, so that when his aged mother wished to depart her beloved son was in a state which rendered him deaf to all entreaties, no less than physically incapable of controlling his own movements. The result was Mrs. M'Neil, whose little sips of champagne had somehow flown to her head, had to drive home alone, and Jamie was put to bed on board the yacht.

During that memorable afternoon it would appear that the Count again referred in glowing terms to his splendid Cuban properties, and he graciously undertook to receive Mrs. M'Neil's fifteen thousand pounds, if she liked to sell her consols, and allow her seven per cent. for it. She had other property in the shape of

houses and land, but the Count was good enough to advise her to retain those. The consols, however, were easily realized, and fifteen thousand was just a nice little sum to invest. To this proposal she lent a willing ear, and her dutiful son strongly urged her to fall in with it; and so firm was his own faith in the Count, that he asked him if he might be permitted to put some of his money into the wonderful tobacco estate. The Count did not consent readily, but yielded at last to the old lady's persuasion, and James M'Neil pledged himself to let the Count have five thousand pounds.

Let us now come to the sequel. Within a week of that festive day old Mrs. M'Neil had actually sold out her consols and handed the money to Count Lara Cavillero, and received from him an elaborately-engrossed parchment bearing seven per cent. coupons, payable quarterly. The blank spaces in the parchment had been filled in with the old lady's name and such other particulars as were requisite; and the particulars of the deed set forth that she had a mortgage on the rich tobacco estates of Count Lara Cavillero, situated in Cuba, to the extent of fifteen thousand pounds, bearing interest at the rate of seven per cent. per annum, payable quarterly on the presentation of the coupons attached; the mortgage to be repaid any time subject to three months' notice.

A similar deed was given to James M'Neil, but his lien on the estate was only for the trifling sum of five thousand pounds. That an old woman like Mrs. M'Neil should have been induced to part with her money was not a matter to be wondered at, but that a hard-headed money-grubber such as James was should have allowed himself to be netted so easily is more

difficult to realize by those who do not know to what depth of folly human nature is capable of descending. In his case, perhaps his charmer had something to do with it, but the glamour of the Count's greatness, his title, his superb yacht, his diamonds, his outward show of wealth, *et cetera*, served to daze him, and take captive for the time being such commonsense as he possessed. Anyway, whatever it was, and account for it as you like, the hard fact remains that James M'Neil did part with the sum of five thousand pounds to a man of whom he absolutely knew nothing, save what the man himself had told him. But then it must not be forgotten that the Count had come with a letter of introduction from the Provost of Rothesay, and James concluded, mayhap, that his brother, the Provost, and the Count were old friends. Be that as it may, it is testimony to the fascinating power possessed by the Count that he was enabled to induce James to part with his siller so easily. But the power did not stop there. The Provost had also given him a letter to a Mr. Robert Walker, who was the agent of a branch bank in Glasgow, and it is perhaps more wonderful still that this gentleman was induced by some marvellous occult means to enrich the Count's coffers by another five hundred pounds. It was a poor little sum, but it was nearly Walker's all, and seven per cent. on five hundred meant thirty-five pounds a year. That was not to be sneezed at.

A few days later the charming Count and his friends, who had gathered from various quarters, sailed away, elated with the rich harvest they had reaped from Scottish soil. The glamour being now removed, it suddenly occurred to Robert Walker to do what he ought to have done at first, and that was to make a few inquiries about Count Lara Cavillero through the Spanish

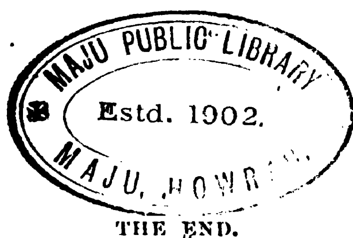
consul, and he was soon informed that there was no such nobleman known amongst the aristocracy of Spain; and a telegram to Cuba elicited the response that no such person as Count Lara Cavillero had an acre of ground there.

This was startling news indeed, and up went the cry of "Swindle," which was echoed and re-echoed from various quarters of the land; and soon it was known that as clever a gang of swindlers as ever traded on human cupidity and folly had been at work, and in a few weeks had netted nearly forty thousand pounds one way and another. And the means by which they had scored this, to them, pleasant result were a splendid yacht, fascinating manners, and imposing-looking parchment deeds. The sensation caused by the exposure of the swindle was very great, as may be imagined, and in Mrs. M'Neil's case it was disastrous, for it so preyed on the poor old lady's mind that she died.

I took the matter up, and in a little while I ascertained that the yacht had been purchased at Bordeaux, from the executors of a wealthy wine merchant deceased. The purchaser was ostensibly Count Lara Cavillero, and he had it refurnished and done up. After it had fulfilled the purpose for which it had been purchased, it was sold in Brest for nearly as much as had been paid for it.

I traced the so-called Count to Paris, thence to Geneva, where I effected his arrest, and also that of his wife and assumed daughter; but, as a matter of fact, she was his sister-in-law. His real name was White, but he had been many years abroad, and had lived by his wits. In due course he was extradited, and after due trial sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, while the two women received lighter sentences. Three

other members of the gang were arrested in France, but they were badly wanted by the French police, who would not give them up. The rest of the scoundrels escaped, and unfortunately very little of the money was ever recovered."



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